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Notes on Contributors

CHARLES TOMLINSON's most recent book is *Written on Water* (Oxford University).

MARK PERLBERG* is the author of *The Burning Field,* published in 1970 by William Morrow and available as an Apollo paperback. He lives in Chicago.

GEORGE HITCHCOCK* is the editor and publisher of *Kayak.*

DAVID WAGONER's seventh novel, *The Road to Many a Wonder,* will be published in June by Farrar, Straus & Giroux; his seventh book of poems, *Sleeping in the Woods,* will be published in the autumn by Indiana University Press.

SAMUEL HAZO's* most recent volume of poetry is *Once for the Last Bandit* (University of Pittsburgh, 1972). He is Director of the International Poetry Forum in Pittsburgh, and a Professor of Literature at Duquesne University.

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS, a professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles, is a former advisory editor of THE HUDSON REVIEW. His new book, *The Roman Stamp: Frame and Façade in Some Forms of Neo-Classicism,* will be published in the summer by University of California.

WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN is the author of *Semantics, Linguistics, and Criticism,* published by Random House last year. He will be reviewing recorded music from time to time for THE HUDSON REVIEW.

ROBERT S. CLARK's essay, "Berlioz and His Trojans," appeared in the Winter, 1973-74 issue of this Review.

MARCIA B. SIEGEL is THE HUDSON REVIEW's regular dance critic; she is the author of a collection of dance articles and reviews, *At the Vanishing Point* (Saturday Review Press).

GUY DAVENPORT's short story "Robot," first published in THE HUDSON REVIEW (Autumn, 1972) is included in this year's O. Henry Prize stories; his *Tatlin!* (five stories and a novella) will be published in the summer by Scribner's.

JOHN N. MORRIS is Professor of English at Washington University where he mainly teaches the eighteenth century. He has published a book of criticism, *Versions of the Self: Studies in English Autobiography* (Basic Books, 1966) and a book of poems, *Green Business* (Atheneum, 1970).

BRUCE ALLEN is a freelance writer and critic who formerly taught in the Department of English at the University of New Hampshire. Mr. Allen lives in Kittery, Maine.

J. E. CHAMBERLIN is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Toronto.

BERNARD BERGONZI's most recent book, *The Turn of a Century* (Barnes & Noble), was reviewed by Roger Sale in our last issue.

LESLIE GEORGE KATZ* is the editor and publisher of The Eakins Press.

SONYA RUDIKOFF's critical commentary appears in various journals. She formerly wrote art criticism for THE HUDSON REVIEW, *Arts,* and other magazines.

ANTHONY THWAITE,* who is at present co-editor of *Encounter,* was formerly literary editor of the *Listener* (1962-65) and of the *New Statesman* (1968-72). He has published five books of poems, most recently *New Confessions* (Oxford University).

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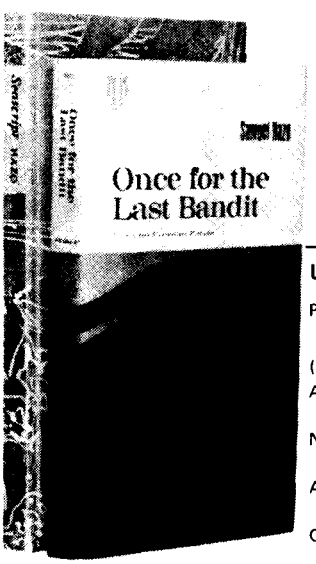

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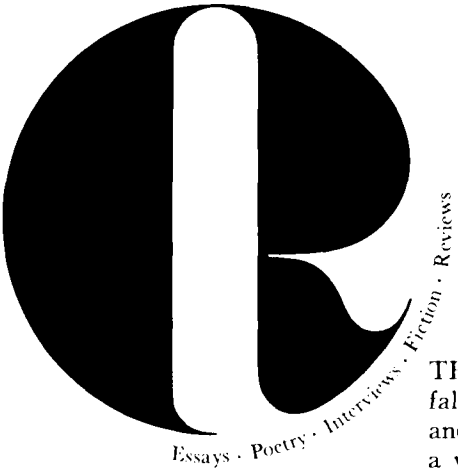

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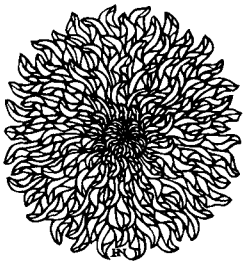

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CHARLES TOMLINSON

Hill Walk

for Philippe and Anne-Marie Jaccottet

Innumerable and unnameable, foreign flowers
  Of a reluctant April climbed the slopes
Beside us. Among them, rosemary and thyme
  Assuaged the coldness of the air, their fragrance
So intense, it seemed as if the thought
  Of that day's rarity had sharpened sense, as now
It sharpens memory. And yet such pungencies
  Are there an affair of every day—Provençal
Commonplaces, like the walls, recalling
  In their broken sinuousness, our own
Limestone barriers, half undone
  By time, and patched against its sure effacement
To retain the lineaments of a place.
  In our walk, time used us well that rhymed
With its own herbs. We crested idly
  That hill of ilexes and savours to emerge
Along the plateau at last whose granite
  Gave on to air: it showed us then
The place we had started from and the day
  Half gone, measured against the distances
That lay beneath, a territory travelled.
  All stretched to the first fold
Of that unending landscape where we trace
  Through circuits, drops and terraces
The outworks, ruinous and overgrown,
  Where space on space has labyrinthed past time:
The unseizable citadel glimmering back at us,
  We contemplated no assault, no easy victory:
Fragility seemed sufficiency that day
  Where we sat by the abyss, and saw each hill
Crowned with its habitations and its crumbled stronghold
  In the scents of inconstant April, in its cold.

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Thaw CHARLES TOMLINSON

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Discrepancies

That year, March began in April.
Wasn't it floes from Greenland
Going south, they said, and the earthquake
In Nicaragua—a collision between
The seismic and the atmospheric that released
An effervescence into the air? Its tang and sting
Excited the nostrils of the yearling,
The dead leaves circling rose again
But the clouds said, "Snow, snow,"
The sun melting the threat before it fell.
Nicaragua blazed into the chaos,
A polar glittering of gulls
Swung round and round on the mid-air currents
Over the windswept bed of their inland sea.
Nature has evolved beyond us—
You couldn't have painted it, I mean,
Unless on the whirlpool's fish-eye mirror
Where the blinding navel winds all discrepancies in.

The Greeting

One instant of morning,
he cast a glance
idly, half blindly
into the depths of distance:

space and its Eden
of green and blue
warranted more watching
than such gazing through:

but the far roofs gave
a "Good day" back,
defeating that negligence
with an unlooked-for greeting:

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it was the day's one time
that the light on them
would carry their image
as far as to him

then abandon the row,
its lit-up walls
and unequal pitches,
its sharpness to shadow:

one instant of morning
rendered him time
and opened him space,
one whole without seam.

Melody

Song is being . . .
—Rilke

That phrase in the head—that snatch repeated
  Could have led nowhere, but for the will
To hear the consequence of it—the reply
  To "I am dying, I am denying, I, I. . . ."
A shred of the self, an unease: its pleasure
  Would not please the hearer long who heard it
Only within: a violin carries it
  To surrounding air, letting it meet
That first and silent pressure, come
  To test its setting out, its hovering
Over a spun doubt, its own questioning.
  Through a second instrument it flows,
But a third goes counter to it, and a fourth
  Derides both the pride and pains
It has taken to stay proud; and forces,
  Frees it to a singing strength
Until that thread of song, defied,
  Gathering a tributary power, must find
The river course, winding in which
  It can outgo itself—can lose

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The Storm CHARLES TOMLINSON

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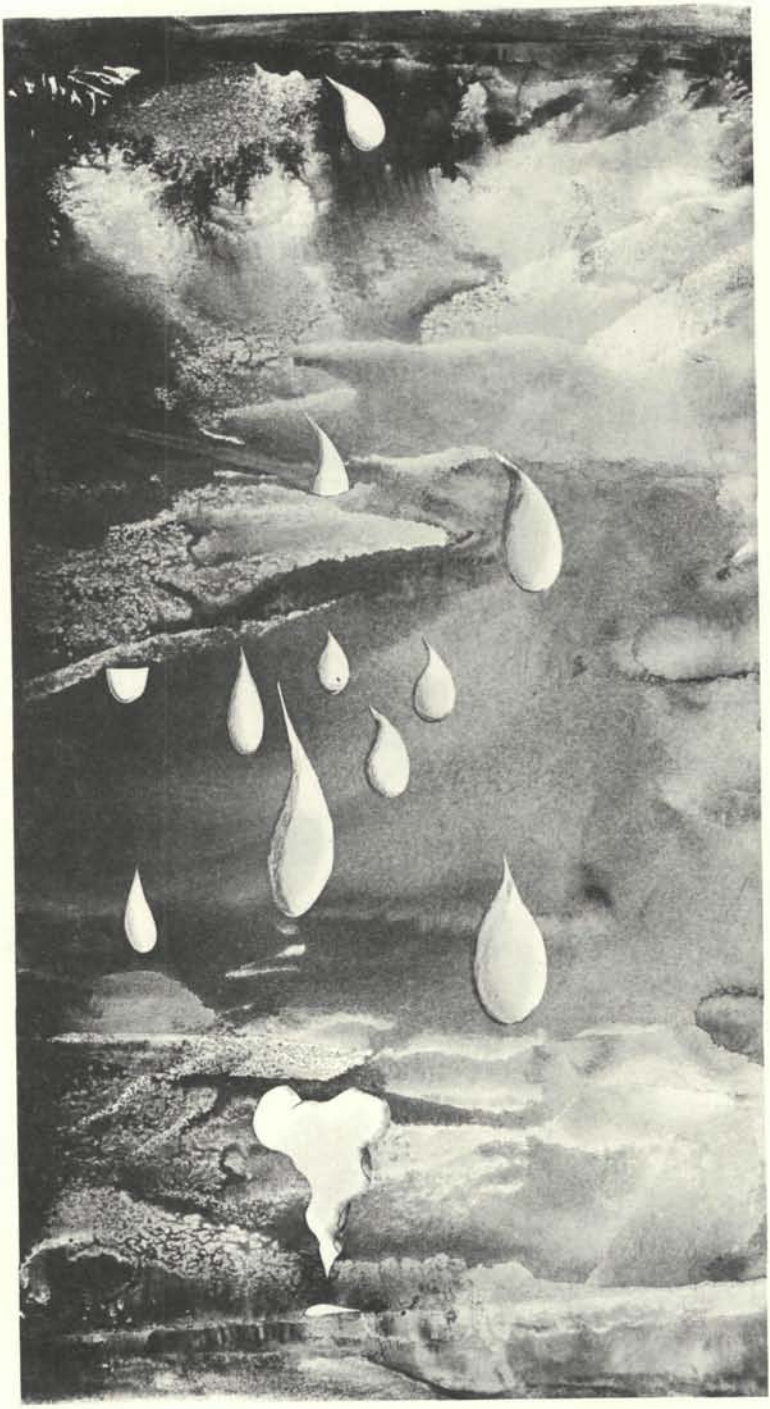

The Milk of Silence CHARLES TOMLINSON

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Not the reality of pain, but that sense
  Of sequestration: the myth of no future
And no ancestry save ache. *Gesang*
  Ist Dasein? Song is the measure, rather,
Of being's spread and height, the moonrise
  That tips and touches, recovering from the night
The lost hill-lines, the sleeping prospects:
  It is the will to exchange the graph of pain
Acknowledged, charted and repeated, for the range
  Of an unpredicted terrain. Each phrase
Now follows the undulations of slope, rise
  And drop, released along generous contours
And curving towards a sea where
  The play of light across the dark immensity,
Moves in a shimmering completeness. The tide
  Ridden in unexulting quiet, rides
Up against the craft that sails it
  Tossed and tried, through the groundswell
To the dense calm of unfathomable silence.

The Witnesses

Now that the hillside woods are dense with summer,
  One enters with a new, an untaught sense
Of heights and distances. Before,
  Lacking the profusion, the protrusion of the leaves,
Spaces seemed far shallower that, now,
  Thronged with ledges of overhanging green,
Bear down on the air beneath. One can no longer see
  The high recession stretching beyond each tree,
But the view, shut round, lets through
  The mind into a palpitation of jostled surfaces.
Nudging, they overlap, reach out
  Beckoning, bridging the underdeeps that stir
Unsounded among the foliage of a hundred trees
  That fill an aerial city's every thoroughfare
With the steady vociferation of unhuman witnesses.

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MARK PERLBERG

The Garden

In memory of my mother

For weeks you had been journeying into yourself
Slowly at first, and writing occasional poems
To mark certain junctions, dark and airy crossings.
Then as the illness gathered
And you began to shrink before our eyes,
Like a figure disappearing in space,
Your flight became a kind of inward freefall.
The last station you came to before the end was fear,

Fear so insistent that in your hospital room
Above the city, now remote as Arcturus,
You lay in a white silence, entirely alone—the living
  who came to you refused to countenance your journey—
Your face drawn about the bone, eyes uprolled, mouth gone,
Contracted on a single point of terror.

It was your daughter who loosed you from that mooring
By naming names:
Out of her own teeming conversations with herself
She knew that one must agree to meet with the dying,
  under a favorite tree, out on the edge of town,
  in front of a rain-streaked shop,
And walk part way with them, touching hands.
At last you had found a pilot for your journey.
It was a dusky afternoon in deep August.
Shadows of leaves stirred on the walls of the room.

She told you, now an unfamiliar, small old lady,
That she knew you would be able to do it,
And she returned bright fables learned from you as a child.
She said it is like the seasons following one another,
She talked of seeds sailing,

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Of how the tall trees burn,
Of swallows blowing about in a gusty sky.

She said there would be a garden
Bright with so many flowers, with walks and grasses.
And your eyes widened at last before the end.
The great fear left you,
You grew easy in your pillows
And stepped light as a girl
Into the banks of shadows
That now drowned the walls of the room.

A Northern Beach

A beach on a northern island
Needs getting used to: there is so much to understand.
First there are the rocks that slide and roll underfoot—
Their shapes and tints and textures (do not expect much sand)—
Oval rocks, casually sought by strollers on an August morning,
As are the round stones; all shapes that fit the hand.
Tints catch the eye: the salt and pepper flecks of gray granite,
The creamy sheen of quartz, and those black stones
Veined by starry bursts and traceries that seem a chunk of space
fallen from the sky.
There are the shales, with shades of violet, bronze
And lichen green. They make fine skipping stones.
Once I found a slab crossed by streams of garnets.
Flints and hunks of marble are waxen to the touch,
And there are rocks grained and weathered like driftwood;
Some glint with mica.
After the rocks, the seaweed,
Dark and leathery at the fringes that lift and fall in the clear tides,
The color of mustard on the humped part of the mounds
That have lain longer in the periodic sun.
Beyond the beach and the island's bedrock

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That lies in flat, animal shapes back to the trees,
Are the trees themselves: the angular pine and fir and cedar,
Which may, perhaps like the beach, be just now slipping into fog.
Hold these elements (not forgetting the glint of the water
  with its colors dimming in the fog; the occasional small boat
  tugging at its mooring; the high, sweet sound of birds
  singing in the pines; the salt scent from sea and weeds;
  the peppermint wash from the meadows behind the trees),
Hold these elements: then mark how perspective changes
At the slightest turn of the light—or of the mind.

Lines for Some Landscapes of the Northern Sung

Walk on beside your oxen, atom of a man.
Can you hear the water threading the brown cliffs high and away?
It plunges down the mountain into cloud,
  doubtless the source of the amber stream at your feet.
We are on a journey, you and I.
Perhaps you will lodge tonight at the inn that casts no shadows,
  across the stream, and then proceed refreshed
To the dark temple whose peaks break through the crab-claw trees
Beyond the bridge,
Seeing only the next turn of the tricky path.
But I can set my spirit soaring like the wind, like a ninth Immortal,
Everywhere at once in Fan K'uan's mountains.
I can leap the cliff's sheer, listen for the wind moaning
  in the gorges—was that a gibbon's scream?—
Float like mist in and about all the hollows,
While you clip-clop on, following your nose.
Never mind, we are both pilgrims in these tea-colored mountains,
That pile into the crisp air with such vast solidity,
You by inheritance, I by hankering.

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They tell us our place. They say something
Is solid as a planet in this heaving world.
And they say, perhaps, with T'ao Ch'ien,
That when the time comes for us to go into the mountains—
Do not make a fuss,
Step out quietly on the stream,
For the wind that blows against these peaks,
That shakes against the stars above the mountains,
Moves in your blood, and you and I are shadow and star.

There Are Afternoons in Summer

There are afternoons in summer that are so fine
They seem an interval of time's first day that has never ended
And will never end.

I am sure it is the palpable force of the light,
Of light so clear that one sees everything open to air:
the veins on the underside of leaves
the sharp serrations of the fern
the shadow cast by each small stone
the glass edge of the sea that is the horizon's line
the sun flinging diamond fires from a patch of the bay,
the luminous wing-edge of a gull crossing.

The illusion dies as the day dies
When light lies down level in the weeds
And the sky in the west takes color like a bruise
And the evening walks in cold shadows like the morning.

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View of Amsterdam

an etching by Rembrandt

Tranquility of a spring or summer day.
Water is running in the marshes.
The sky is cloudless. All is distantly seen.
Two small figures, blotches, barely, walk upon a thread of road,
Beyond which a line of low buildings faces the harbor.
Above them, bigger than the church, a windmill—
bold cross of commerce—is scratched against the sky,
And others run in a faint file to the horizon.
Beyond the salt marsh and a stretch of harbor water,
Vessels at dockside. Not a smoke wisp curls in the air.
It must be morning.

GEORGE HITCHCOCK

The Chauffeur of Lilacs

—from an old photo

The bandits leap up to the cab,
their stilettos pressed to the flanks
of firemen; the luminous pistons
idle in baths of steam. The brakemen
disappear into culverts, their caps

full of coal. The trigger-finger
changes seats with the fake marquis,
the salesman leaves the smoker,
his cigar half chewed. One-Eyed Pete
draws curses on the grimy window;

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the lady in bombazine conveniently
faints as
El Capitano, man
of moustaches, enters the coach, tips
his prodigious sombrero to the women,
spins a dirty peseta and hawks on the carpet.
The ladies swallow their diamonds.
This train will definitely be late
to North Platte.

So bullets
are bitten, the darkness shot down.
The conductor bows with a belly full
of smoke. Beside the engineer stands
the chauffeur of lilacs, a glowing
flare in his glove. They all,
passengers and crew, the dream
and the artist alike, dissolve
into sepia fractions.

Poem for a Departed Pilgrim

Now that you've gone to that Tibetan
whose smile transfigures Denver,
on my pine wall there's nothing left
save the shadow where late hours

you stood, upside down with legs
lotus-like entwined—your grave
blue eyes intent upon a world
that's not so easily reversed.

The ego is too much with us,
you said, and sought out Lhasa
in the Rockies, hoping to slough
the weight of self in crystal-

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line meditation high among
the snows. Goodbye! Goodbye.
Behind, you've left a pool of light
where dust-motes blindly jog,

dancers to the Buddha's great unwritten
half-only comprehended song.

Departure

Through the trees outside small
pieces of darkness fall like grace-
notes. The sorrel, mild ferns
and azalea gather the night to them.

We are alone now, you and I, in
this sighing house beneath the firs.
You nod wisely and begin to unravel
the cloth I'd spent all yesterday

weaving. When the night has eaten
the firs, and the sullen glass
gives back nothing but our ashen
images, you'll go to that other

lover, he who commands your nerve-
ends and lays out a map
of follicles only his fingertips
can follow. Then shall I,

wrapped in the hush of blackness,
kneel and gather those bits of
thread which dropped from your hand
to the bare, bare floor.

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DAVID WAGONER

Report from a Forest Logged by the Weyerhaeuser Company

Three square miles clear-cut.
Now only the facts matter:
The heaps of gray-splintered rubble,
The churned-up duff, the roots, the bulldozed slash,
The silence,

And beyond the ninth hummock
(All of them pitched sideways like wrecked houses)
A creek still running somewhere, bridged and dammed
By cracked branches.
No birdsong. Not one note.

And this is April, a sunlit morning.
Nothing but facts. Wedges like halfmoons
Fallen where saws cut over and under them
Bear ninety or more rings.
A trillium gapes at so much light.

Among the living: a bent huckleberry,
A patch of a salal, a wasp,
And now, making a mistake about me,
Two brown-and-black butterflies landing
For a moment on my boot.

Among the dead: thousands of fir seedlings
A foot high, planted ten feet apart,
Parched brown for lack of the usual free rain,
Two buckshot beercans, and overhead,
A vulture big as an eagle.

Selective logging, they say, we'll take three miles,
It's good for the bears and deer, they say,

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More brush and berries sooner or later,
We're thinking about the future—if you're in it
With us, they say. It's a comfort to say

Like *Dividend* or *Forest Management* or *Keep Out.*
They've managed this to a fare-thee-well.
In Chicago, hogs think about hog futures.
But staying with the facts, the facts,
I mourn with my back against a stump.

Talking to Barr Creek

Under the peachleaf willows, alders, and choke cherries,
By coltsfoot, devil's club, sweet-after-death,
And bittersweet nightshade,
Like a fool, I sit here talking to you, begging a favor,
A lesson as hard and long as your bed of stones
To hold me together.
At first, thinking of you, my mind slid down like a leaf
From source to mouth, as if you were only one
Piece of yourself at a time,
As if you were nowhere but here or there, nothing but now,
One place, one measure. But you are all at once,
Beginning through ending.
What man could look at you all day and not be a beggar?
How could he take his eyes at their face-value?
How could his body
Bear its dead weight? Grant me your endless, ungrudging impulse
Forward, the lavishness of your light movements,
Your constant inconstancy,
Your leaping and shallowing, your stretches of black and amber,
Bluing and whitening, your long-drawn wearing away,
Your sudden stillness.
From the mountain lake ten miles uphill to the broad river,
Teach me your spirit, going yet staying, being
Born, vanishing, enduring.

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SAMUEL HAZO

For V After Z

Tyrants ago, you would have had
your tongue sliced off, your fingers
crushed, your wife indentured
and your name disgraced.
Today
you simply can't go home.
What's left but Paris, West
Berlin, Vienna, Rome?
Remember when we talked Cavafy
while our coffees clouded
with goatcream and triple sugars?
One poet was afoot and reading
what was Greek to both of us
and still sounds Greek to me.
The news was Esso and a king.
The Yankee Fleet in port
behaved like any fleet in port.
"Happy the nation," wrote Montesquieu,
"whose annals of history are dull."
Dullness swam in our coffee
as we toasted time to write
and do that well, love one wife
and do that better, live
as witnesses and do that best.
We toasted everyone but undermen
and fearers of the word.
When these
prevailed along with soldiers,
censors, millionaires and chosen
churchmen, toasts became
seditious as a song or syllable.
Because you praised a countryman
who heeded pulses with his fingertips,

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you got the boot.
The charge?
Spreading fire, asking
questions, jarring the faith
of true believers.
The sentence?
Exile.
Not quite as bad
as watching vultures peck your liver,
drinking hemlock or deserving
feces on your grave, but punishment
enough. . .
Tonight, for what
it's worth, let's say that Montesquieu
was right.
Dull days might
come again when witnesses
can toast their coffee cold,
and only poetry is dangerous.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Boyish Charmer and Last Mad Genius

NOT YET OUT OF HIS TWENTIES Chekhov already had a celebrity second only to Tolstoy's among Russian writers of the time; but he never set up as a great man. He was a *Wunderkind* unspoiled by success, a brilliant and unpretentious personality, a boyish charmer who charmed Tolstoy himself to tears. Great writer and great personality; yet the personality doesn't coincide—as in Tolstoy or Dostoevsky it entirely does—with the writer. Of course Tolstoy knew both: from the first recognized and admired Chekhov the "true poet and artist" of the stories; also knew well face to face the "simply wonderful" Chekhov, "the dear, beautiful man," the irresistible presence whose lack of affectation, quickness of wit, irreverence, candor, clarity, guile, panache, and uncapturability survive, for us, not so much in Chekhov's formal *oeuvre* as in his letters.[1] We are delighted, for example, by the correspondent who, writing home from his journey across Siberia, brings up for comparison these nuances of Siberian and Russian etiquette: "On entering a Siberian bedroom at night you are not assailed by the peculiar Russian stench. True, handing me a teaspoon, an old woman wiped it on her behind, but then they will not serve you tea without a tablecloth, people don't belch in your presence, don't search for insects in their hair . . ."; or, staying at a farm on the Don Steppe with the neolithic family he later memorialized in his story "The Pecheneg," describes their strenuous way of life:

> Latrines, ashtrays, and other amenities are unknown, unless you travel for some half a dozen miles. To relieve yourself (irrespective of the weather), you have to walk down into the ravine and choose a bush; you are warned not to sit down until you have convinced yourself that under the bush there is no troublesome rattlesnake or some other creature.

[1] LETTERS OF ANTON CHEKHOV. Selected and edited by *Avrahm Yarmolinsky*. Viking. $12.50. LETTERS OF ANTON CHEKHOV. Translated by *Michael Henry Heim* in collaboration with *Simon Karlinsky*. Selection, Commentary, and Introduction by *Simon Karlinsky*. Harper and Row. $17.50.

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> The population: old man Kravtzov and his wife, also Pyotr, a Cossack cornet, and several other children, as well as Nikita, a shepherd, and Akulina, a cook. Of dogs there is no end, and they are all ferocious, allowing no one to pass, day or night. I need a constant escort, or else the number of Russia's men of letters will diminish by one. The worst creature is Mukhtar, an old hound from whose mug dirty tow is suspended instead of hair. He hates me and every time I leave the house he rushes at me with a savage roar. . . .
>
> The main occupation is rational agronomy, which was introduced by the young cornet, who acquired 5 rubles' and 40 copecks' worth of books on agriculture. The main branch of the economy is ceaseless day-long killing. They kill sparrows, swallows, bumblebees, magpies, ravens so that they should not eat the bees; they kill bees so that they should not damage the blossoms of the fruit trees, and fell trees so that they should not impoverish the soil. The result is a peculiar cycle based on the latest scientific data.
>
> We go to bed at nine. Sleep is disturbed by the howls of the dogs in the courtyard, and under my couch another hound barks fiercely in response to them. A discharge of firearms wakes me up: through the window my hosts fire rifles at some animal that is damaging the economy. To leave the house at night it is necessary to wake up the cornet, or else the dogs will tear you to pieces. The result is that the cornet's sleep depends on the quantity of tea and milk that I had drunk previously.

Years later, however, Chekhov expanded and disintegrated this material into the pathos of "The Pecheneg," which attempts an introspective representation of the old Cossack's fear of death (with tactless echoes of Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich: "And now he kept thinking and he longed to pitch upon some significant thought unlike others, which would be a guide to him in life, and he wanted to think out principles of some sort for himself so as to make his life as deep and earnest as he imagined himself to be").

Chekhovian pathos is sometimes an attempt to ventilate or refine opaque, refractory, unliterary material. Always the theoretical spokesman for objectivity as the whole of the writer's art, Chekhov in his own stories isn't above forcing a Cossack farmer or a Moscow merchant to carry on like Hamlet. But in his letters, taking for granted as well as expressly stating that "the heart of another is a darkness," he seems content to exercise introspection only on himself and let God take care of old man Kravtzov; trusts appearances and gives his mettlesome comic improvisation plenty of room:

> Very well—I'll get married, if that's what you want. But my conditions are: everything will have to be as it was before—that is, she'll

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> have to live in Moscow, while I'll live in the country and make trips to see her. As for the sort of bliss that persists day in and day out, from one morning to the next—I won't be able to take it. When I'm told day after day about the same thing in the same tone of voice, I become ferocious. I become ferocious in the company of Sergeyenko, for instance, because he looks very much like a woman ("intelligent and responsive") and because when I'm with him the notion pops into my head that my wife may possibly look like him. I promise to be a splendid husband, but give me the sort of wife who, like the moon, won't appear in my heaven every night. I won't write any better just because I get married.

This little comedy of temperament was dashed off by Chekhov at thirty-five, parrying the usual advice from one's married best friend. By an irony of fate—it could have been a Chekhov story—Chekhov eventually got just what he told Alexey Suvorin he wanted: a wife (the actress Olga Knipper) who lived and worked in Moscow while Chekhov for his failing health had to languish in the provinces; and at forty, very ill with tuberculosis, Chekhov responds to a typical joke from one's betrothed (Olga had heard, so she wrote, that he was giving her up for a priest's daughter) by turning it into a cameo of a bedroom farce:

> Thank you for your good wishes on the occasion of my marriage. I informed my fiancée of your intention of coming to Yalta in order to make trouble for her. She replied that she would not let me out of her embraces when that "wicked woman" came to Yalta. I observed that to remain in someone's embraces for so long in hot weather was unhygienic. She took offense and became thoughtful, as if trying to guess in what circle I had learned this *façon de parler,* and after a short while she announced that the theater is evil and that my decision to write no more plays was in every way laudatory, and asked me to kiss her. To this I answered that now, since I have the rank of an Academician, it did not behoove me to kiss frequently. She burst into tears, and I left.

"Do write, or there will be trouble," he archly ends one letter to Suvorin; and ends another with a postscript: "Wire me about something. I love to receive telegrams." Their friendship is as puzzling to us as many friendships are from the outside, especially one so far in the past and with so little surviving evidence. Suvorin was the elder by twenty-six years, a minor literary figure who by the time Chekhov knew him had become the wealthy publisher of a crudely reactionary Petersburg newspaper. During the Dreyfus

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case, while Chekhov, in Nice for his health, was writing Suvorin careful, lucid, incontestable accounts ("I know the case from the stenographic report") of Dreyfus's innocence and Zola's heroism, *New Times* kept thundering away at an international Jewish "Syndicate" that was suborning even so-called impartial observers with huge bribes: in a dry parenthesis to Suvorin, Chekhov takes note of the imputation by confessing that he has already been bought with "a hundred francs from the Jews." Suvorin had been an early and influential literary patron of Chekhov's, and gratitude no doubt played a part in Chekhov's feeling for him; Chekhov's father, a dull and violent man, had terrorized his wife and children, and Chekhov ("There was no childhood in my childhood") may in compensation have welcomed acquaintance with an older man as shrewd and worldly as Suvorin. Or one can give up and merely summarize: because Chekhov was a man of unfailing civic conscience and Suvorin a conscious, unscrupulous, energetic flunky of autocratic repression, the two of them had many disagreements; but they enjoyed each other's company wherever they could have it, traveled together as often as convenience permitted, and talked on into the night whenever they met. "I'm passionately eager to have a talk with you," writes Chekhov, back from his six-months' voyage to Sakhalin, and moved to offer a declaration of personal commitment unique in his correspondence: "I'm seething inside. You're the only one I want because you're the only one I can talk to." Chekhov's friendship with Suvorin was the closest and most enduring of his life; his only intimacy.

Another relationship of Chekhov's that puzzles us here and now was his long flirtation with a friend of his sister's, Lydia Mizinova: "Lika." Yarmolinsky's edition of the letters, which is a good general sampling, includes thirteen to Lika; whereas Karlinsky, setting out to "put together a coherent intellectual portrait," omits "the flirtatious letters to various women [Lika explicitly] who were of no real importance in his life." Women may wish to debate with Professor Karlinsky the question: Are a man's flirtations merely necessary but otherwise insignificant, like stops at the service station or the barber's? even flirtations he sustains for ten years? even one with a woman as desperately in love with Chekhov as Lika was, whom his letters smother with a coy and impenetrable charade of gallantry ("Bewitching, astounding

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Lika! . . . Yours from head to heels, with all my soul and all my heart, until my tombstone, to the point of self-oblivion, of stupefaction, of frenzy"[2])? But don't applaud Yarmolinsky yet, since for some reason he includes none of the letters—to Lika or anybody else—from Chekhov's travels with Suvorin in Western Europe during the fall of 1894.

Lika is in Switzerland at the time, involved, as Chekhov knows, in a liaison with a friend of his, Potapenko; and Chekhov keeps trying to track her down: "Potapenko told me that you would be in Switzerland. If this is so, write me exactly where in Switzerland so I can look you up. Of course, I'd be delighted to see you." When at last he hears from her, he gets the news—"What was there for me to do, Daddy? You always managed to escape and shove me off on someone else"—that Lika is pregnant and Potapenko has absconded; all she wants now is to see Chekhov and talk with him: "I don't think you would cast a stone at me. It seems to me that you were always indifferent to people, to their inadequacies and weaknesses." Chekhov thereupon writes his sister at once that he has wearied of traveling and will come home early: "I had counted on seeing Lika in Paris, but it now develops that she is in Switzerland." To Lika he writes (no more charades): "Unfortunately, I cannot go to Switzerland, for I'm with Suvorin [he had been with Suvorin all the time, for instance when he wrote Lika that he would be delighted to see her in Switzerland]"; and there is a single ominous sentence of offended dignity: "You ought not to have written about my indifference to people." The episode[3] doesn't interest editors who would rather settle for a grand or poignant portrait, but it's a fascinating wart nevertheless.

Chekhov wasn't a prude, quite the contrary. Within a year he had used the Lika-Potapenko affair sympathetically (indeed sentimentally) in *The Sea Gull.* Nor did he categorically reject, ex-

[2] As well as less courtly phrases in a letter he fabricated and sent to Lika for her inspection; it was addressed to "Trofim," the lover he had invented for her: "Trofim! You son of a bitch. If you don't stop pursuing Lika, I'll shove a corkscrew into you, you cheap riffraff, in the place that rhymes with lass. Ah, you turd! . . ." Neither K. nor Y. prints this letter. It is quoted in Ernest J. Simmons, *Chekhov,* Little, Brown, 1962, p. 287.

[3] This summary of it is taken from Simmons, pp. 324-327. "Verochka," a story Chekhov wrote several years before he met "the beautiful Lika," concerns a girl passionately in love with a man "affected . . . by the insuperable habit of looking at things objectively, which often hinders people from living."

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cept from a woman who was presuming to make something momentous out of a flirtation, the charge of indifference: on another occasion, writing to Suvorin, he maintained that "in this world it *is necessary to be indifferent. Only indifferent people can see* things clearly, be fair, and work—that, of course, applies only to people who are honorable and intelligent; egoists and brainless people are indifferent as it is." What is indifference? Chekhov certainly wasn't indifferent, in the customary sense, to women: over many years in many places he was a very active ladies' man. (For those who have read Chekhov only in the standard selections that emphasize his pathos, gentleness, forbearance—at worst, his disenchantment—one of the surprises of the relatively comprehensive Constance Garnett edition is to discover how many Maupassant-like cynical and knowing stories of bourgeois adultery he bothered to write.) "To take revenge on the censors [who had cut up a story of his on the perils of marriage] and all those who gloated over my misfortune, my friends and I are forming a Cuckolding Society. The constitution has already been submitted for approval. I was elected chairman by a majority of fourteen to three." He had every qualification for the office: tall, handsome, young, famous, vivacious, gallant, not given to telling all; electrically alert to amorous opportunities wherever he happened to be, as, on his way home from Sakhalin, during a brief stopover in Ceylon ("When I have children, I'll say to them, not without pride: 'Why, you sons of bitches, I've had relations in my day with a black-eyed Hindu girl, and guess where? In a coconut grove, on a moonlit night!' "); or in the two metropolises, where it might have taken Leporello and a new catalogue aria to do him justice (back at his country estate after a visit to Moscow, he told Suvorin that "girls, girls, girls" had been among his chief occupations while he was there; his conquests in Moscow and Petersburg were legendary if not mythical).

"I have very little passion," Chekhov said in response to a comment on his writing. He had no memories of affection: "When I was a child, I was so rarely caressed that even now, as an adult, I react to caresses as something unheard of, unknown." At sixteen he was living alone in his native Taganrog supporting himself as a tutor, and sending money to Moscow where his father, mother, brothers, and sister had moved after the failure of his father's

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grocery; from the age of nineteen, he supported his family with income from his writing while he managed to complete his studies at the medical school and became a practicing physician. "His unceasing solicitude for his family, his kindness to his friends, should not give rise to illusions. Unquestionably he was doing—and would continue to do—a great deal for them, but it was not because of surges of affection; there is no cry from the heart in his letters to his brothers, for instance, or in his notes to Leikin, his most regular correspondent during this period. His charity was conscious, his spirit of devotion was deliberate. . . ."[4]

By his early twenties symptoms of tuberculosis were already evident. He had a chronically very painful and incapacitating case of hemorrhoids, which he attributed not only to his "sedentary life" but to "my excesses *in Baccho et Veneris*" (besides the ladies, he liked all-night parties and heavy drinking, and he hated to be alone). "The constant nervous strain under which he lived, aggravated by overwork and money worries, soon made itself felt. [His brother] Michael records that 'the moment he fell asleep, he began "to jerk." He would suddenly wake up terrified, a strange force seemed to throw him up on the bed, something inside him seemed to be torn up "by the root," he would jump out of bed and could not go to sleep for a long time.'"[5] By the age of twenty-seven he had written six hundred short stories. "What aristocratic writers take from nature gratis," he wrote to Suvorin at twenty-nine,

> the less privileged must pay for with their youth. Try and write a story about a young man—the son of a serf, a former grocer, choirboy, schoolboy and university student, raised on respect for rank, kissing the priests' hands, worshiping the ideas of others, and giving thanks for every piece of bread, receiving frequent whippings, making the rounds as a tutor without galoshes, brawling, torturing animals, enjoying dinners at the houses of rich relatives, needlessly hypocritical before God and man merely to acknowledge his own insignificance—write about how this young man squeezes the slave out of himself drop by drop and how, on waking up one fine morning, he finds that the blood coursing through his veins is no longer the blood of a slave, but that of a real human being.

Chekhov never himself wrote such a story, especially with so un-

[4] Daniel Gillès, *Chekhov: Observer Without Illusion*, Funk and Wagnalls, 1968, p. 60.

[5] David Magarshack, *Chekhov*, Greenwood Press, 1970, p. 72.

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likely an ending. "My soul has wasted away," he wrote Suvorin in a bleaker mood, "because of the awareness that I am working for the sake of money and that money is the center of my activity. This nagging feeling, together with the justice of it, makes my writing a contemptible occupation in my eyes, I have no respect for what I write, I am listless and bore my own self, and I am glad I have medicine which, no matter what, I am following not for the sake of money, after all."

At thirty, to the dismay of his family and friends, he went off on his self-imposed journey of six thousand miles to investigate the penal colonies of Sakhalin, and was away from Russia for six months. The literary result was the strangest piece he ever wrote, his only book-length work, *The Island of Sakhalin:* half of it unassimilated information and statistics, one quarter indignant predictable sociology (conditions are so bad that no rehabilitation is possible and all the convicts, even those free to live in the villages, are hopelessly dehumanized), one quarter diamond-hard bits of Chekhovian observation (sly, brisk, opinionated convicts telling their stories to the visitor and leading quite bearable lives as if neither they nor Chekhov had ever heard of the doctrinaire sociology on the next or previous page). The journey made him feel that he had *done* something, and it was only at the moment of his return from Sakhalin that he could describe himself as "passionately eager" for something; in the instance, for a talk with Suvorin; but it was an impulse that never got mentioned again in his correspondence. At thirty-seven, sitting in a Moscow restaurant with Suvorin, he had his first massive tubercular hemorrhage.

He wanted to give, or give away, whatever he had. He was endlessly generous with his time, his public wisdom, his professional skills, his money (though money was a perpetual anxiety, and he never seemed to have enough for himself and his family). He spent a great deal of time reading, annotating, editing, even rewriting unsolicited manuscripts from young writers:

> A promising author might be urged to send him still more stories to read. Or he would try to place the manuscripts himself or personally talk to a publisher in an effort to interest him in putting out a book for a beginner. . . . If one could not give everything that was asked, he insisted, one must at least give something. In responding to requests for help, he never worried about being deceived by imposters. It was better to be deceived by them, he argued, then fail to answer an appeal for assistance.[6]

[6] Simmons, pp. 115-116.

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His political attitudes were models of intelligence, humaneness, and practicality, in the shadow of a bigoted, sanctimonious, repressive government (quite like his father) that, luckily, wasn't efficient enough to be totalitarian: when Gorky's membership in the Academy was canceled for political reasons, Chekhov resigned with a letter of protest; when scholarly young Jews were recommended to him, he pulled strings to try to get them past the racial laws into the schools; with money he collected (some of it from Suvorin), he built local schools for the peasants; his book on Sakhalin had its intended effect of instigating reforms in the penal system; on every public issue that came up in his letters—not only his letters to the publisher and perpetrator of shameless government-dictated slanders, Suvorin—he presented transparently, at length, and with unanswerable exactness the argument of common decency:

> Your [Suvorin's] columns on the disturbances were unsatisfactory, and could not be otherwise, because no one can pass judgment in print on the disturbances when all mention of the facts is prohibited. The state forbade you to write, it forbids the truth to be told, that is arbitrary rule, and you talk lightheartedly about the rights and prerogatives of the state in connection with this arbitrary rule. The mind refuses to accept this combination as logical. You talk about the rights of the state, but you're disregarding what is legal. Rights and justice are the same for the state as for any juridical person. If the state wrongfully alienates a piece of my land, I can bring an action against it and the court will re-establish my right to that land. Shouldn't the same rules apply when the state beats me with a riding crop? Shouldn't I raise a hue and cry over my violated rights if it commits violence upon me? The concept of the state should be founded on definite legal relationships. If it is not, it is a bogeyman, an empty sound that produces an imaginary fright.[7]

During the famine of 1891 he collected relief funds and tried against calculated governmental obstruction to organize large-scale relief projects: the peasants were selling their horses to buy food, and Chekhov helped develop a plan to buy up the horses in order to keep them alive through the winter and turn them

[7] At the other end of the political spectrum, among the radicals, he found equally cogent evidence for his astonishing prophecy regarding post-Tsarist Russia: "Under the banner of science, art, and a protest against the suppression of free thought, among us in Russia there will reign toads and crocodiles of a sort that even Spain did not know at the time of the Inquisition. Well, you will see it! Narrowmindedness, great pretensions, inordinate self-love, and complete absence of a literary and social conscience will do their work. . . ."

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back to the peasants the following spring. At Melikhovo, the country estate where he lived for six years, he carried on without remuneration a very busy medical practice among the neighboring peasants and kept a pharmacy for them at his own expense. He spent months assisting in a census of his district (he had already, while in Sakhalin, done the first census there: ten thousand filled-out cards summing up interviews all of which, so far as is known, were conducted and transcribed by Chekhov himself). When a cholera epidemic threatened, he volunteered his services to the local authorities, begging money and hospital space from gentry, monks, factory-owners; he wrote to Suvorin that in a few weeks he had treated a thousand patients:

> My soul is weary. I'm bored. Not to belong to oneself, to think only of diarrhea, to start up at night from the dog's barking and a knock at the gate (haven't they come for me?), to drive jades along unknown roads, to read about and expect nothing but cholera, and at the same time to be entirely indifferent to this illness and the people you serve—that, my dear sir, is a mess that might do in anyone.

The "mess" could certainly be discounted here as a simple enough temporary consequence of terrible and heroic strain and fatigue; but it was a state of mind very common in Chekhov even when he was comparatively inactive and unharassed. His code-word for it was "boredom," a word that for twenty years was "a kind of leitmotif in his correspondence"[8]: "I'm bored, although from a detached point of view cholera has its interesting sides"; "depressing boredom"; "enormously bored"; "No signs of boredom so far"; "For all that, I am bored"; "Days of greatest boredom"; I am so terribly bored"; "For the time being things aren't too boring"; "I'm bored, but not in the *Weltschmerz* sense"; "Is it growing old [he wrote at thirty-two] or just boredom with living? I don't know, but I have no very great desire to live. Or to die, either; but really I have had about enough of living"; (inviting a friend to visit him in Yalta) "Tolstoy is here and Gorky is here, so you won't be bored, I hope"; so often in his letters to his wife that at last she struck back, alarmed, "You're always bored!"; so often to Gorky that the customarily quite respectful younger man ventured to rebuke him—"it's very unpleasant to read in your letters that you are bored. It is utterly unbecoming to you, you see, and entirely unnecessary." Chekhov's usual way of deal-

[8] Gillès, p. 85.

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ing with it was to go off on a trip somewhere, Petersburg or Sakhalin or Paris, but it stuck to him like a label (barely off the train in Nice: "I'm already cruelly bored here"). The "mess" he describes to Suvorin is a kind of terminal boredom; what he himself calls—but wouldn't let Lika call—his "indifference to people": the failure of sympathy, the breakdown of connection (idle curiosity, random sensual impulse, fellow-feeling, loving-kindness, charity, domestic affection) that not uncommonly afflicts men in their forties as (in Eric Hoffer's image) the glow of sensuality begins to fade. Tolstoy experienced it at fifty and described it in *A Confession:* suffering something like a paralysis of the will and just managing to restrain himself from suicide, he eventually came out of it as a self-made religious ideologue with new (fewer and more inflexible) lines of connection that would protect him from it for the rest of his life. Chekhov's experience of it was in many ways special; more subtle and more debilitating. It seems to have been a familiar condition of his consciousness almost from boyhood, and (therefore?) never occurred as a crisis with flashes of panic and temptations to suicide; it was compatible with, indeed seemed to provoke, prodigies of physical, mental, and even erotic activity; it didn't inhibit his will and intelligence, which continued to operate as if they had all the accustomed sanctions of impulse and feeling; it made its appearance as a tone, a kind of darkening.

Tolstoy's only reservation after their first meeting was that the charming young man (with whom Tolstoy's daughter Tatyana fell in love at first sight!) "seems not to have a definite point of view"; on a later occasion he remarked that Chekhov wasn't "religious": misgivings that may have taken the names of Tolstoy's new ideology but were nonetheless attentive to a quality in Chekhov. Tolstoy, perhaps because of the delicacy of his feelings toward Chekhov, said nothing to him on the matter; but others, who had similar misgivings, spoke out. Suvorin, for instance, having read "The Horse-Stealers," asserted that it had no moral basis or point of view (no belief, no "religion"), that it was so "objective" as to shirk its moral responsibility; and Chekhov replied with one of his capsule manifestoes:

> You upbraid me about objectivity, styling it indifference to good and evil, absence of ideals and ideas, etc. You would have me say, in depicting horse thieves, that stealing horses is an evil. But then, that has been known a long while, even without me. Let jurors

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> judge then, for my business is only to show them as they are. I write: You are dealing with horse thieves—know, then, that these are no beggars but men with full bellies, that these men belong to a cult, and that stealing horses is not simply stealing but a passion. Of course, it would be gratifying to couple art with sermonizing, but, personally, I find this exceedingly difficult and, because of conditions imposed by technique, all but impossible. Why, in order to depict horse thieves in seven hundred lines I must constantly think and speak as they do and feel in keeping with their spirit; otherwise, if I add a pinch of subjectivity, the images will become diffused and the story will not be as compact as it behooves all short stories to be. When I write, I rely fully on the reader, on the assumption that he himself will add the subjective elements that are lacking in the story. . . .

Doubtless it's the tendency in Chekhov's early pieces—among them such superb comic sketches as "Frost," "The Shepherd's Pipe," "The Malefactor," "Sergeant Prishibeyev"—for the whole job to be done by observation, dramatization, an economy of quick external strokes; certainly it's the mode of which Chekhov at his characteristic best is the supreme master, it evolves into the lean unmoralized vividness of such mature masterpieces as "Gusev" and "The Murder." Still, once Chekhov graduated from skits and squibs, he often introduced elements into his fiction that "coupled art with sermonizing," that added a pound as well as a pinch of subjectivity. Both he and Suvorin, intent on disagreeing, fail to notice the incorrectness of their mutual assumption: that Chekhov's fiction is invariably objective. Now in fact "The Horse-Stealers" is mostly as objective as Chekhov and Suvorin think it altogether is: a crisp, vigorous, dispassionate account of "an empty-headed fellow" who gets cheated and robbed of horse and gear by a pair of horse-thieves and their accomplice, the tavern-keeper's daughter. Only, the story has a very odd, apparently unironic coda, in which the protagonist keeps rehearsing and embroidering the lesson he has learned: "Who says it's a sin to enjoy oneself? . . . Those who have never lived in freedom like Merik and Kalashnikov, and have never loved Lyubka; they have been beggars all their lives, have lived without any pleasure, and have only loved their wives, who are like frogs"; and he goes on to the end finding moral and metaphysical reasons for cheating and stealing. The coda is a kind of inadvertent palinode: no empty-headed fellow is likely to be so ambitiously rational; and his implausible reflec-

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tions expose, not the impact of experience on a simpleton, but Chekhov's own envious admiration of the amoral energy which in the story proper he has been content to observe and dramatize. So in his manifesto Chekhov is doubly wrong, and for the wrong reasons Suvorin's criticism of "The Horse-Stealers" is justified, because the total effect of this finally most unobjective story is to attack traditional morality ("belief") without suggesting an alternative that reads better than an adolescent's daydream.

Critics who wish to prove that Chekhov doesn't lack belief have several texts of his in evidence: "My holy of holies is the human body, health, intelligence, talent, inspiration, love and the most absolute freedom imaginable"; "there is greater love for man in electricity and steam than in continence and abstention from meat"; "God's world is good. Only one thing isn't good: ourselves." The sentiments are unexceptionable (except for the slight flavor of smugness in the last), but they resemble the sentiments of a critic (one of Suvorin's hacks on *New Times*) who, disliking Chekhov's cheerlessness, proclaimed that "The greatest miracle is man himself" and "The aim of life is life itself"; whereupon Chekhov retorted, "This isn't life, it's caramels." Chekhov has beliefs (some of them caramels) but no belief. The tone of his stories, when he loses confidence in their *ad hoc* moral configurations, their objectivity, wavers between the pyrrhonism of "The Horse-Stealers"[9] and the hollow pathos of "The Pecheneg."

The tone of his plays too. Consider these caramels, out of the mouths of characters toward whom the author shows every sign of approval:

> . . . what matters is not fame, not glory, not what I used to dream about, it's how to endure, to bear my cross, and have faith. I have faith and it all doesn't hurt me so much, and when I think of my calling I'm not afraid of life.
>
> * * *
>
> . . . when I pass the peasants' woods that I have saved from being chopped down, or when I hear the sound of my young wood rustling, the stand I planted with my own hands, I realize that climate too is a little in my power, and that a thousand years from now if man should be happy, why, then I'll be a small part of that too. . . .

[9] "Ward No. 6" has as its ostensible theme: One must care! But the tone of the story demonstrates the impossibility of caring about anything except the avoidance of pain, and pain won't do as a synecdoche of reality. Chekhov's characters are too small for his universe.

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> How shall I put it? It seems to me that everything on earth must change little by little and is already changing before our very eyes. In two or three hundred, eventually a thousand, years—it's not a matter of time—a new, happy life will come. We won't share in that life, of course, but we are living for it now, working, well—suffering; we are creating it—and in that alone lies the purpose of our being and, if you like, our happiness.

—on all of which (from *The Sea Gull, Uncle Vanya,* and *The Three Sisters,* respectively) there is a handy comment: "The greatest miracle is man himself." Partisans of Chekhov's drama will be glad to explain the type-casting and repetitiveness of the plays—moony girls, suicidal young men, philosophical tippling doctors, *fin-de-siècle* freeze-frame tableaux, disquisitions on the need for work, work, work and on the promise of life a thousand years from now—nor are they abashed by the bursts of gunfire in all but the last of the five full-length plays (Ivanov's suicide, Treplev's two attempts of which only the second is successful, Uncle Vanya's attempt to murder Serebryakov, Tusenbach's death in a duel). But Chekhov's own afterthoughts in *The Cherry Orchard* are more instructive: Epihodov's revolver ("I read all kinds of remarkable books, but the trouble is I cannot discover my own inclinations, whether to live or to shoot myself, but nevertheless, I always carry a revolver on me"); the moony housemaid, Dunyasha ("Like a flower—I am such a sensitive girl, I love tender words awfully"); Gayev, whom everybody tells to shut up when he is about to launch a philosophical disquisition. *The Cherry Orchard,* not only a witty parody of the earlier plays, has a vertebrate plot, distinct and credibly motivated characters, and an earned pathos: "Oh, my childhood, my innocence!" exclaims Lyubov Andreyevna, looking from the window of her old nursery out to the orchard, and reminding us of the very different life in Paris she has left behind and will soon be going back to.

The Cherry Orchard is an attractive and resourceful comedy; but Chekhov's element is fiction. In fiction the stance of objectivity that is so important to his idea of himself has a responsible rôle *inside* the medium (Chekhov the dramatist seems to assume that, because drama is by definition "objective" and the dramatist isn't *in* the play at all, he can allow his characters to talk like sentimental novelists without himself incurring any responsibility for what they say). Much of the strength of the great novella "Peas-

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ants" is in the unengaged steadiness of the presentation, which establishes without pathos or didacticism the range of these ordinary lives, and unemphatically accommodates the most extraordinary moment in Chekhov's fiction—while the family sleeps, the return of Fyokla (Helen and Odysseus at once) from her nocturnal wanderings:

> "Oh, Lord!" sighed the cook.
>
> Someone rapped gently, ever so gently, at the window. It must have been Fyokla, come back. Olga got up, and yawning and whispering a prayer, unlocked the door, then pulled the bolt of the outer door. But no one came in; only there was a cold draft of air from the street and the entry suddenly grew bright with moonlight. Through the open door could be seen the silent, deserted street, and the moon itself floating across the sky.
>
> "Who's there?" called Olga.
>
> "Me," came the answer, "it's me."
>
> Near the door, hugging the wall, stood Fyokla, stark naked. She was shivering with cold, her teeth were chattering, and in the bright moonlight she looked very pale, strange, and beautiful. The shadows and the bright spots of moonlight on her skin stood out sharply, and her dark eyebrows and firm, young breasts were defined with peculiar distinctness.
>
> "The ruffians over there stripped me and turned me out like this," she muttered. "I had to go home without my clothes—mother-naked. Bring me something to put on."
>
> "But come inside," Olga said softly, beginning to shiver too.
>
> "I don't want the old folks to see." Granny was, in fact, already stirring and grumbling, and the old man asked: "Who's there?" Olga brought out her own shift and skirt, dressed Fyokla, and then both went softly into the house, trying to close the door noiselessly.
>
> "Is that you, you slick one?" Granny grumbled angrily, guessing who it was. "Curse you, you nightwalker! Why don't the devil take you!"
>
> "It's all right, it's all right," whispered Olga, wrapping Fyokla up; "it's all right, dearie."
>
> All was quiet again. They always slept badly; each one was kept awake by something nagging and persistent: the old man by the pain in his back, Granny by anxiety and malice, Marya by fear, the children by itch and hunger. Now, too, their sleep was restless; they kept turning from one side to the other, they talked in their sleep, they got up for a drink.
>
> Fyokla suddenly burst out into a loud, coarse howl, but checked herself at once, and only sobbed from time to time, her sobs growing softer and more muffled until she was still. Occasionally from the other side of the river came the sound of the striking of the

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hours; but the clock struck oddly—first five and then three.

"Oh, Lord!" sighed the cook.

"Peasants" is Chekhov's fulfillment as the honest and unerring, the objective, writer he wished to be; master of surface and routine, of the radiance of ordinariness. ("In the Ravine," another impressive late novella about peasant life, tempers its realism with a strikingly allegorized plot, which may portend but doesn't excuse the infanticide Chekhov chooses for its gruesome climax.) On a single occasion Chekhov laid claim to the title that literary history grants him as if he were born with it—master of pathos. In "The Lady with the Pet Dog" Chekhov moves into the narrative with uninhibited sympathy for the weak and passionate lovers, and creates the most touching of all short stories about the weaknesses of men and women and the power of love. No story is less objective:

> He went up to her and took her by the shoulders, to fondle her and say something diverting, and at that moment he caught sight of himself in the mirror.
>
> His hair was already beginning to turn gray. And it seemed odd to him that he had grown so much older in the last few years, and lost his looks. The shoulders on which his hands rested were warm and heaving. He felt compassion for this life, still so warm and lovely, but probably about to begin to fade and wither like his own. Why did she love him so much? He always seemed to women different from what he was, and they loved in him not himself, but the man whom their imagination created and whom they had been eagerly seeking all their lives, and afterwards, when they saw their mistake, they loved him nevertheless. And not one of them had been happy with him. In the past he had met women, come together with them, parted from them, but he had never once loved; it was anything you please, but not love. And only now when his head was gray he had fallen in love, really, truly—for the first time in his life.

"The Lady with the Pet Dog" is not only great and affecting but a stunning *tour de force*: its shopworn dandy of a hero, if he were not saved in the nick of time by love (and, as he would insist, he really, truly is—the story is fragrant with the earthly salvation of its two poor souls), would find himself sooner or later in the grip of the horrors. Just once Chekhov wrote about the horrors, in his most autobiographical story, "The Black Monk." Because it is neither comic nor (except at the bitter end) pathetic, it is seldom reprinted; it isn't what Chekhov's readers expect now or expected then:

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> My novella, "Three Years," will appear in the January issue of *Russian Thought*. The project was one thing but what resulted was something else, rather flabby and not silken as I wanted it to be but cambric. . . .
>
> I am fed up with the same thing all the time; I want to write about devils, about terrifying, volcanic women, about wizards—but alas! the demand is for well-intentioned tales and stories from the life of the Ivan Gavriloviches and their spouses.

Chekhov is right about "Three Years," and might have said much the same thing even about a piece as fine and strong in its impulse, conception, and details as "My Life," another of his nearly novel-length stories that trace out the full trajectories of middle-class lives. Ultimately there is nothing surprising or inevitable about either. Short stories, as a species, tend to be more or less effective demonstrations of more or less complex and not too depressing theses about daily life (for which Chekhov's enthusiasm wasn't limitless: "So far as I can see, life is composed only of horrors, squabbles, and vulgarities, which either come in droves or follow one another"). Chekhov's stories aren't often exceptions to the rule, although, having written more stories than any other writer known to history, he could start up and set under way these little mechanisms more effortlessly than anybody else ever. But "The Black Monk" he must have written for himself, because it's about genius, the burden of consciousness, devils, and the bottomless pit. (Chekhov's favorite Russian writer wasn't Pushkin, with whom he is often compared for clarity and straightforwardness, but the grotesque fantasist Gogol.)

"The Black Monk" assembles evidence to prove that life is a bad dream from which some are lucky enough to awake into madness. In its details it's Chekhov's only unremitting allegory, an eerily mixed-up and hectic allegory of the fall, set in an Eden-like orchard supervised by a God-like old horticulturist with a marriageable daughter (could Chekhov have read "Rappaccini's Daughter"? but, except for the title character's materialization out of a whirlwind, "The Black Monk" has none of Hawthorne's Gothic claptrap). The hero is an urban intellectual, formerly the old man's ward, who returns to Eden for his nerves, regains his health, comes to reverence the old man, falls in love with the girl and marries her, and is about to live happily every after when his wife discovers he is mad—. Complicated enough, but the story

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doesn't end here, and this summary omits mysterious "nasty" quarrels and reconciliations between father and daughter; the hero's yearning for "something gigantic, unfathomable, stupendous"; and the apparition of the black monk (insinuating *Doppelgänger*), who materializes to persuade the hero that intellectuals are "the chosen of God" and the vanguard of the millennial future. But Eve sees to it that Adam is cured (and Samson! "his head was closely cropped, his beautiful long hair was gone") of seeing things. So he learns to hate his wife and her father ("How fortunate Buddha, Mahomed, and Shakespeare were that their kind relations and doctors did not cure them of their ecstasy and their inspiration"):

> Before going to bed, Tanya said to him:
>
> "Father adores you. You are cross with him about something, and it is killing him. Look at him; he is ageing, not from day to day, but from hour to hour. I entreat you, Andryusha, for God's sake, for the sake of your dead father, for the sake of my peace of mind, be affectionate to him."
>
> "I can't, I don't want to."
>
> "But why?" asked Tanya, beginning to tremble all over. "Explain why."
>
> "Because he is antipathetic to me, that's all," said Kovrin carelessly; and he shrugged his shoulders. "But we won't talk about him: he is your father."
>
> "I can't understand, I can't," said Tanya, pressing her hands to her temples and staring at a fixed point. "Something incomprehensible, awful, is going on in the house. You have changed, grown unlike yourself. . . . You, clever, extraordinary man as you are, are irritated over trifles, meddle in paltry nonsense. . . . Such trivial things excite you, that sometimes one is simply amazed and can't believe that it is you. Come, come, don't be angry," she went on, kissing his hands, frightened of her own words. "You are clever, kind, noble. You will be just to father. He is so good."
>
> "He is not good; he is just good-natured. Burlesque old uncles like your father, with well-fed, good-natured faces, extraordinarily hospitable and queer, at one time used to touch me and amuse me in novels and in farces and in life; now I dislike them. They are egoists to the marrow of their bones. What disgusts me most of all is their being so well-fed, and that purely bovine, purely hoggish optimism of a full stomach."
>
> Tanya sat down on the bed and laid her head on the pillow.
>
> "This is torture," she said, and from her voice it was evident that she was utterly exhausted, and that it was hard for her to speak.

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"Not one moment of peace since the winter. . . . Why, it's awful! My God! I am wretched."

"Oh, of course, I am Herod, and you and your father are the innocents. Of course." [All ellipses Chekhov's.]

—and, forsaking Eve, he teaches her to hate him in return: "My father has just died. I owe that to you, for you have killed him. Our garden is being ruined; strangers are managing it already—that is, the very thing is happening that poor father dreaded. That, too, I owe to you. I hate you with my whole soul, and I hope you may soon perish." Happily, in the last moment of his life, as he collapses dying of a tubercular hemorrhage (his t.b., introduced a few pages before the end of this fifty-page story, is another perverse and cruel shock to the reader), the black monk appears to him again, restores his madness, and allows him to die in a dream of Eve and the unfallen Eden:

"Why did you not believe me?" he asked reproachfully, looking affectionately at Kovrin. "If you had believed me then, that you were a genius, you would not have spent these two years so gloomily and so wretchedly."

Kovrin already believed that he was one of God's chosen and a genius; he vividly recalled his conversations with the monk in the past and tried to speak, but the blood flowed from his throat on to his breast, and not knowing what he was doing, he passed his hands over his breast, and his cuffs were soaked with blood. He tried to call Varvara Nikolaevna, who was asleep behind the screen; he made an effort and said:

"Tanya!"

He fell to the floor, and propping himself on his arms, called again:

"Tanya!"

He called Tanya, called to the great garden with the gorgeous flowers sprinkled with dew, called to the park, the pines with their shaggy roots, the rye-field, his marvellous learning, his youth, courage, joy—called to life, which was so lovely. He saw on the floor near his face a great pool of blood, and was too weak to utter a word, but an unspeakable, infinite happiness flooded his whole being. Below, under the balcony, they were playing the serenade, and the black monk whispered to him that he was a genius, and that he was dying only because his frail human body had lost its balance and could no longer serve as a mortal garb of genius.

When Varvara Nikolaevna woke up and came out from behind the screen, Kovrin was dead, and a blissful smile was set upon his face.

Chekhov married Olga Knipper in 1901; he had three years to

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live. (Potapenko, who had been out of touch, wrote him on a literary matter, and Chekhov replied breaking the news: "I've got married. But at my age this is no more worth mentioning than growing bald.") Olga and Chekhov had been lovers, and seem to have enjoyed each other's company when they could be together. Mostly, though, Olga was living in Moscow, a leading actress at the Moscow Art Theater, and Chekhov was in Yalta because of his illness; she wrote him anxious, pouting, depressed, demanding, unreasonable, offended, grandiose, semi-hysterical letters (which must at least have stirred him up a bit), and he answered patiently, affectionately, wearily. Her letters after their first parting (it must be borne in mind that Olga was no child-bride—she was thirty-three and Chekhov forty-one at the time of their marriage) could scarcely have been more insensitive:

> "Anton, you must now write something new. There are so many subjects in your head. Don't be lazy, darling. Do make an effort to write." Four days later: "Anton, write something. I can hardly wait for the time when I shall read your new story. Write, darling. It will help to while away the time of our separation." Again three days later: "I am glad that you are writing, though only reluctantly. Work, darling, work." . . . "Darling, don't you feel any pleasure in being able to write? Doesn't it thrill you? . . . You are my great genius. You are the Russian Maupassant." And next day: "Don't give way to melancholy. Write something more for me and for Russia."[10]

—and so on, till she ends 1901 with New Year's greetings: "Darling Anton, are you going to start work or not? Please make a little effort. Surely your time will pass more quickly if you are writing. Don't you think so? I know you will write something nice, something elegant—elegant in form, of course. I feel terribly excited about it already." Meanwhile Chekhov, in Yalta, was hemorrhaging almost daily (as he apologetically let her know) and able to write no more than a few lines a day before being overcome by nervous and physical exhaustion.

Ivan Bunin tells of visiting them on one of Chekhov's rare occasions in Moscow after the marriage:

> . . . Olga, with a night off, elected to go to a charity concert with Nemirovich-Danchenko. Her escort, handsome in his tails and smelling of cigar smoke and eau de cologne, arrived, and Olga, young, fresh, and especially lovely in her evening dress, said to her husband:

[10] Magarshack, pp. 361-362.

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"Don't be bored without me, darling, but I know you're always happy with Bukishonchik. *Au revoir,* sweet"—and departed. Bunin was delighted to be allowed to remain and chat with his friend. Chekhov washed his head while he reminisced about his past, his family, or discussed mutual literary acquaintances. Bunin also remembered that on this occasion Chekhov dreamed out loud, as he had done several times recently, of wanting to go off as a wanderer to holy places and then settle down in some monastery near a forest and lake where he could sit on a bench outside the gates on the long summer evenings. . . . At about four in the morning Olga returned, reeking of wine. "What, you are not yet asleep, darling? That's bad. And you are still here, Bukishonchik, but of course he's not bored with you!"[11]

Several months before his death, a silly literary woman with whom he had corresponded over the years sent him what she must have considered a Dostoevskian letter:

I would very much like to see you, to speak to you in order to relieve my mind of much that is so hateful to me. It is all the more ludicrous and sad, especially at my age when life has passed, to carry on so painfully! Truly, it is shameful. In all conscience, however, I do not feel that I have deserved it. Forgive this unsolicited frankness, Anton Pavlovich. Although I did not seek it, I've seized this opportunity. I feared I would die without succeeding in saying that I have always profoundly esteemed you and regarded you as the best of men. And what of it if I have lowered myself in your opinion? So it had to be. It has been the greatest sorrow of my life. Now it is time to say it. . . . I don't want you to forgive me, but I do want you to understand.

—and Chekhov's reply closes the door firmly on all the literary agonies of the Russian nineteenth century:

Forgive me. I'm frozen, for I've just returned from Tsaritsyno . . . my hands can hardly write and I must pack. All the best to you, keep cheerful, take a less complicated view of life, for it is probably much simpler in reality. And whether life, of which we know nothing, deserves all the tormenting thoughts on which our Russian minds wear themselves out—this is still a question.[12]

His death came quite suddenly in a hotel room in Germany, where he and Olga had gone for a vacation. ("What a despairing heap of boredom is this German resort Badenweiler!" he wrote to a friend.) One evening he improvised for her a comic story

[11] Simmons, p. 618.

[12] Both letters are quoted from Simmons, pp. 621-622. Neither appears in Karlinsky or Yarmolinsky.

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about hungry tourists. He fell asleep, but woke up at midnight and asked her to call a doctor (it was a request he had never made before). When the doctor entered the room, Chekhov raised his head and said in a decisive voice, *"Ich sterbe!"* (He made a point of seeing everything clearly to the very end.) The doctor had ordered champagne to ease Chekhov's breathing; Chekhov (in Olga's words) "picked up the glass, turned to me, smiled his wonderful smile and said: 'It's been such a long time since I've had champagne.' He drank it all to the last drop, quietly lay down on his left side and was soon silent forever." "Even if Olga Knipper had invented all this," says Karlinsky, who quotes it, "there could hardly have been a more appropriate death scene for Chekhov, with its apt symbols for life, affirmation and stoic acceptance of the inevitable." But Chekhov, boyish charmer who knew all about upbeat or tart-and-tender endings, last mad genius of the great Russian century, might have demurred: "I am fed up with the same thing all the time; I want to write about devils, about terrifying, volcanic women, about wizards—but alas! the demand is for well-intentioned tales from the life of the Ivan Gavriloviches and their spouses."

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ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Ideas of Ugly

Beauty is only skin-deep, but ugly is to the bone.
—Old saying, courtesy of Alice Sachs

THERE ARE ALL MANNER OF PASSING ALLUSIONS and invocations, but the only head-on, full-scale handling of the topic seems to be an 1853 *Aesthetik des Hässlichen* by a pupil of Hegel's, Karl Rosenkranz. The fact that it has recently been reprinted, after a century and a quarter, suggests that the subject at least retains a certain vitality—not to commit oneself about Herr Rosenkranz. Still, his first principle is bold and abundant in its suggestions, even if they mostly take the form of reactions. "Wäre die Schöne nicht, so wäre das Hässliche gar nicht, denn es existirt nur als die Negation desselben." (If there were no beauty, there would be no ugly at all, for the latter exists only as the negation of the former.) It's a blunt philosophical stance that requires some immediate adjustment of one's "Yes" and "No" responses. For of course if one starts with the presumption of universal dialectic, inherent in nature as in civilization, ugly and beautiful are bound to play roles in it along with being and nothing, the finite and the infinite, the one and the many, and so forth and so on. A dialectical thinker is never at a loss for opposites to identify and reconcile, theses to convert into syntheses by the judicious addition of antitheses—and one such energetic antithesis could perfectly well be the ugly.

But in confronting a specific esthetic situation, the dialectic seems likely to distract as much as it focuses our power to say what we feel in the presence of the ugly. I pick up a snail from my walk: is it the negation of any perceptible *Schönheit?* Is that the reason I qualify it as ugly? Perhaps for lack of proper dialectical training, I find myself unable to see it as the negation of an ideal snail, or an ideal animal of any nature. Of course it's the antithesis of a bird because it doesn't fly, and of a fish because it doesn't swim, and of a deer because it doesn't jump. But as I confront it, the animal in its pure animality doesn't seem to be the negation of anything in particular: it is itself, and one of its qualities is that it's ugly.

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No doubt if it were the only beast in the cosmos, it would be neither ugly nor beautiful, any more than it would be small or slow or gelatinous of texture. All these qualities depend on norms based on categories based on an intelligent observer capable of generalization, discrimination, comparison, etc. Given that procedure, it does not seem at all hard to imagine a string of 24 or 56 creatures, none of which would be thought particularly beautiful, but one of which could be accepted as outstandingly ugly. It is no easier to say that the quality of "beauty" is diffused through the norm than that the quality of "ugliness" is concentrated in the exception. Whether one thinks ugly the negation of beauty or a quality in itself evidently depends (among other considerations) on whether one starts from a Hegelian schema or an immediate psychological response. For reasons I am precluded from analyzing, I opt for the latter. I start with the snail, low and slow.

In choosing to do so, I don't want to deny that we *may* experience the ugly as departure from a norm, the beautiful; only to expand this idea, by asserting that beauty also may be a departure from a norm. M. Sartre tells me (*Saint Genet,* III, 1) that beauty is a denial of being, a conversion to appearance; but so for that matter is ugly. Both, as esthetic categories, exist primarily in the mind. But that isn't to say they don't exist in the outside world too. In my poor pragmatic philosophy, it's useful to think of them as mental constructs based equally, based provisionally, but based quite securely (like the concepts "light" and "dark," "high" and "low") on experience and the tacit norms drawn from experience. Defining either of the two extremes in terms of the other, without regard to the common norm from which both depart, strikes me as arbitrary and simplistic. *Negativschöne* seems like a disastrous concept precisely because it presents the problem as part of an already-established solution.

To return, then, to my snail, whose involuted form invites to introspection: I note the fluidity of his progress, the probing, pushing gestures of his blind but sensitive feelers. The arrangement of his inner organs would be grossly asymmetrical if we could see it, and the torsion of adapting to life in a shell has produced certain oddities of arrangement; his intestines having learned to make a 180° loop, his anus is now located in near proximity to his mouth. But this is no badge of disgrace among the gastropods, and offers

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no real basis for esthetic approval or disapproval. As a matter of fact, the snail, seen close up, is a rather graceful, glistening fellow—quite apart from his chaste and harmonious shell, by contrast with which the Guggenheim Museum is a stiff and cumbersome imitation.

And yet the snail is very widely considered ugly. As I face him, close-up, it's not a judgment with which I'm inclined to quarrel. His boneless construction and slimy texture give me the creeps; his rhythmic locomotion reminds me, disagreeably, of peristalsis; he is blind and voracious, and leaves behind him a trail, not only of slime, but of mushy green excrement. He is not a lovely fellow at all. But to call him *Negativschöne* is to deny his very apparent thingliness, his full and creaturely existence. He is not the opposite of anything (or if he is, it is our presumptions that make him so, and he is potentially the opposite of everything), he is himself; and to that self, among many other qualities, ugliness adheres. It may be an adventitious quality, or an essence; I won't argue that either way. But he is ugly, if only in the sense that I have that reaction to him. (And from that reaction I can build to wider conclusions.)

Pursuing our slow friend a little further: he seems to suggest that a great deal of ugly is associated with our own animal functions—is an act of self-consciousness quite distinct from the act of self-forgetfulness that constitutes the classic response to beauty. Engorging, digesting, and excreting are what the ugly brings back to mind; they are aspects of our daily selves that we want to, and perhaps have to suppress. The snake is often thought of as phallic because of his shape; but the popular loathing he inspires is perhaps peristaltic as well—he moves on the ground like an intestine turned inside out. As a matter of fact, he is a glittering and mailed creature, surpassingly graceful in the economy of his motion, the elasticity of his coiling and extending. Far from being inherently ugly, he serves as a recurrent theme in jewelry and decoration. So too does the snail, whose revolting qualities seem to disappear the instant they are caught in a hard, immobile substance, whether gold or ivory or marble. Yet repugnance for snake and snail is there, instinctive though not universal, and often independent of any conditioning or experience. There is an equivalent, though lesser, repugnance for eels, which are simply elongated and spe-

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cially flexible fish; and the hostility to worms is a great deal less—they don't have skeletons, don't have visible mouths or eyes, don't remind us so much of ourselves.

An exoskeletal structure is a frequent element in the ugly, as in the example of the snail, but also in bugs, crabs, imaginary monsters, and other creatures of which we are conscious as crusty on the outside and mushy on the inside. Dragons and fearful beasts, such as Saint George is constantly impaling or Perseus relentlessly smiting, generally have scales, claws, fangs, and often the beaks and horny carapaces of outsize insects. Reversal of magnitudes is at work here, along with an inside-outside reversal that leads to an ugly tinged with fascination. Nature, we feel, is being turned upside down, inside out, back to front, with incompatible elements in combination. On another level, those masters of the grotesque and macabre, Bosch and Breughel, are fond of working eggs into their pictures—generally cracked or open eggs, often with the minimal features and appendages to make them look like human heads. In itself, the egg is an elegant and cleanly spheroid; in a human context, it reminds us of that part of our anatomy where we too are still exoskeletal—where, if you crack the outer shell, you will spill out an ugly grey mass of shapeless paste, within which filthy ideas germinate and fester. Hardshell creatures seem to have a close link with the ugly, not only because they threaten to crack us open with their claws and pincers, but because when they themselves are cracked open, they image forth some part of us.

Is the ugly, then, a purely human category? There's no reason to think so; and an unmistakable argument against the notion is the skunk, who every day stakes his life on a stench that he knows will be more repellent than his flesh or his fur is desirable. If the generically offensive exists for other senses, independently of human judgment (as the skunk bears witness), can there be any doubt that it exists also in those matters of sight and hearing to which we apply by convention the word "ugly"? Hippopotamus, crocodile, turkey-buzzard, dung-beetle, and blue-rumped baboon, not to mention various lizards and dinosaurs, seem to have cultivated the ugly as a variety of the fearsome. There are snakes which under attack puff themselves up and assume fearful attitudes; it's not by accident that among humans a truculent or menacing disposition is referred to as "ugly." Roars, bellows and screams are

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forms of aural assault, or of course defense, analogous to an offensive appearance.

Surely the ugly is rooted in fear, as the beautiful is rooted in lust; only it has departed less decisively from its original primitive roots. "Esthetic distance" has imposed itself on our ideas of the beautiful, idealizing, spiritualizing, intellectualizing them—and in the process largely purging them of elements once native to them, elements of physical pleasure and direct sensual gratification. With the word "ugly" no such purification has taken place; the word retains all its instinctual, gut implications. Plato and the Renaissance Platonizers, who wrote so much about beauty and so little about the ugly, may bear some special responsibility; but the whole structure of Christian values, with their emphasis on the spiritual and immaterial, tends to identify beauty with the universal or abstract, even the geometrical or mathematical, while identifying the ugly with the particular, the expressive, and the material. We see one overhang from this sort of idealism in Herr Rosenkranz, who thinks our world (which, unhappily, he had not seen) would be beautiful if it were a perfect geometrical sphere. Because, instead, it is flattened a bit at the poles and afflicted with mountains and valleys, peaks and declivities, which give it a deplorable irregularity, he declares it ugly. Even for 1853 this seems pretty backward thinking.

As Nietzsche was not the first to point out, when one has a certain variety of good firmly fixed in mind, all departures from it automatically become admixtures of evil; when one starts with a positive definition of beauty, departures from it are all versions of ugly. Beyond any doubt, this is the great tradition, to define ugly only through its relation to beauty. That this tradition has failed and is now utterly dead is the point we shall be making later on. For the present, it is to be noted that the bipolar arrangement of beauty and ugly makes possible a whole spectrum of relationships, which Herr Rosenkranz investigates and distinguishes with categories and subdivisions of scholastic inclusiveness and complexity.

The ugly divides most crucially, in its relation to the beautiful, as it is an accidental or a deliberate antithesis, that is, according to the depth and fullness of intent. Mere accidental formlessness gives way to incorrectness, incorrectness to disfigurement and malformation, leading to the disgusting, grading down through the

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ghastly and demonic to the ultimate level of caricature. We may be surprised to find the art of burlesque and parody so darkly valued by Herr Rosenkranz; but the chain of his logic is unbroken. As Satan was the most beautiful of the sons of light, only slightly deformed by his rictus and goatfoot, so caricature is the art which offends beauty most intimately and viciously, by the use of its own weapons; it is ugly deliberately imposing itself on beauty, confident of its own superior powers.

Milder versions of the antinomy are too familiar for enumeration. Everyone will recall the way in which traditional art (for instance, paintings of the Last Judgment or the Temptation of Saint Anthony, or a poem like *The Divine Comedy*) makes ugly serve the ends of beauty, either as foil or as counter-truth. Medieval and Renaissance painters generally make as hideous as possible the faces of Christ's tormentors, by way of contrasting them with the meek benevolence of the Savior. In the Saint Anthony's one feels on occasion that the macabre and hideous have become matters of fascination in themselves, and the saint is no more than a pretext. But his presence there serves to frame and control the ugly, to give it a context of meaning as certainly (though not as overwhelmingly) as the structure of a Gothic cathedral frames the grotesque of the gargoyles and the carvings under the choir-seats. Indeed, the presence of the ugly often serves to validate the beauty (or whatever other positive value the occasion intimates) with which it is juxtaposed or into which it is subsumed. "Justice made me, and eternal love" is part of the motto that Dante found written on the gate of Hell; it implies that Hell is also beautiful precisely in its ugliness—that if seen as part of the immense whole, it is exactly suited to its function in a universe which can only make, over all, for beauty and beneficence. Sir Thomas Browne, who also was fond of long perspectives, tells us that nothing is ugly except chaos, everything else being deliberately shaped by the creator and bearing the mark of his sublime art.

Since Dante wrote, it has become rather harder to tell whether an artist has his ugly under firm esthetic and moral control, and almost certain that he doesn't have control like Dante's. Among the variables, apart from the strength of the artist's conscious intentions and the diverse susceptibilities of his audience, is a tendency of the ugly to unite intimately with the beautiful, as

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under the formula of the fascinating. Though it is an ancient formula, the differing measures of value placed on this mode bring us inescapably into the area of social history. Professor Praz, in describing the many *femmes fatales,* necrophiliacs, sadists, masochists, diabolists, and eager vampire-victims of the nineteenth century, implies a set of uniform pressures behind the common development. The quantitative change had a fairly prompt qualitative consequence, in first confusing and then inverting the values once attached to the beautiful and the ugly. For the likes of Poe, Baudelaire, Rossetti and Swinburne (all of whom came just too late to impinge on Herr Rosenkranz), beauty was no longer beauty unless it had some element of cruelty, ferocity, or morbidity. This twist solved the conflict between beauty and ugly by locking the two elements indissolubly together—as, in their private imaginings, men had been doing ever since medusas and succubae began to haunt their nightmares. But it also paved the way for a reversal of revolutionary character—for the autonomy or even autarchy of the ugly. If it isn't exactly new, this idea is so old that it seems novel; which is just another way of saying that in touching the primitive, it touches simultaneously on the chic.

That of course raises a new problematic altogether, how to capture the non- or anti-esthetic performance. Whatever the artist represents, by the mere fact of his representing it, becomes subject, directly or indirectly, to the conditions of representation. A piece of garbage surrounded by a frame becomes a pattern of colors, a spatial arrangement, maybe even a statement of some sort. Like all art, it acquires a "point," a principle of organization; it is no longer a global and uninhibited piece of reeking garbage. Evidently it has forfeited authentic being for mere appearance—a stench for the worse in some judgments. How to get rid of this new taint of estheticism is a problem that has exercised modern writers almost as much as modern painters. Esthetic blasphemy, first hailed as a richer, more ironic-symphonic form of estheticism, converted almost at once into ethical anti-estheticism, and then into a kind of total esthetic neutrality—as if estheticism either positive or negative, as a whole, as an entire stance, were nothing but a relic of that numbing genteel tradition which divided the function of art between pleasing and instructing, to the exclusion of more nervy and vital relationships. It isn't the fact that this

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turnabout took place that I want to emphasize, so much as the speed and violence of its negations.

The ugly, which was to the nineteenth-cetury esthete what the phrase "an adventure in evil" implied to the nineteenth-century moralist, involved a gratifying enlargement of the artist's palette without seriously challenging his commitment. Baudelaire's "Une Charogne" is deep solicitation of his mistress; the last stanza begins, as inexorably as Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" (and from the same chord of feelings, only somewhat deepened): "Alors, ô ma beauté . . . ." To hold the two strains in one vibrant diphthong seemed, briefly, to touch a sacred tension. But powerful forces were at work, among which speculation can range freely, which tended to legitimize and neutralize both ugly and evil as normal components of life and art. Trying to explain or describe this process would be ridiculous, under a shelf of volumes. Like most such changes, it took place without much planning or conscious intent, without consistency or uniformity, and amid many whirlpools of partial reaction. But the aspect that concerns this argument most nearly can be simply stated: the ugly has been domesticated in arts and letters, not to speak of life, as an inevitable ingredient of the natural. It is a password, a touchstone. "Hippolyte's leg" was for Flaubert a special and precious effect in *Madame Bovary*; he wove it artfully into the texture of the novel, in such a way as effectually to block out any possibility of Emma's ever undertaking any sort of reconciliation with her husband. The next generation of novelists busied themselves with the device, each man fabricating his own "Hippolyte's leg" for his own romance. But when novels came to consist entirely of "Hippolyte's leg," the neutering of the effect could not be far away. The modern novelist drops shit on his page or signals to his reader with a putrescent canker-sore as languidly as he displays a credit card, and without producing or intending much more of a sensation. Merely making the gesture, in whatever spirit of boredom or bad faith, entitles one to pass for "authentic."

*

Nothing matters more in the functioning of ugly than whether it is one's own or somebody else's—which is just a way of saying, the crucial question is who is responsible for it. A confessional

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writer calls attention to the ugliness of his mind or disposition or person because his complete command of the representation converts anything discreditable into a guarantee of his beautiful, authentic character. By putting his worst foot forward, he advances the flag of his moral integrity. This is Rousseau's gambit for enticing the reader into a complacent, outside-it-all judgment, which then self-destructs under the intimation, Would you have had courage enough to make that avowal? Confessed ugliness acts as a mirror. On the other hand, when seen from the outside, ugliness often resembles a window, through which one can look into the shape of a man's soul. De Flores, the villain-hero of Middleton's *The Changeling,* is so ugly he can hardly think of anything else; but when Beatrice-Joanna comes to know him, she finds to her astonishment that he is even uglier than that, ugly down to the very core of his heart. Charles Bovary's hat had depths of ugliness, Flaubert tells us, like an imbecile's face; that wretched schoolboy hat is an emblem of Charles's misbegotten and clumsily patched-up self, and everything we learn about him throughout the book only deepens this sense of ugliness (not evil, not pathos, nothing natural, just dense, unfathomable ugliness)—so that in the end, that hat becomes a paradigm of the novel itself, within which only the crassest of vulgarity can flourish.

This sort of ugly, akin to that of satiric caricature, is familiar enough as a weapon in the hands of an artist's indignation; we quickly recognize it as such when it is pointed in some particular direction—defined positively, that is, or limited negatively. When we get into the world of deep melancholy or nightmare, where the anger and therefore the ugly are stifled and pervasive, then ugly no longer seems specific and occasioned, it appears autonomous. Yet the advent of ugly without an ulterior motive simply confirms the rich variety of this quality which has the power of deepening to a substance. Without directly claiming autonomy or asserting pre-eminence over other ingredients of a scene (and perhaps aided by the circumstance that it needn't), ugly has proven itself wonderfully adaptable. The Genoese painter Magnasco, doubtless influenced by his native city, painted nothing but rags and ruins. His people (whether beggars, gypsies, or monks) are scarecrows, his landscapes tormented and windswept. Yet a hectic elegance makes itself felt in much of his work, a grace of gesture and regard

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that doesn't negate the ugliness but subsists alongside it; to be described, just as one chooses, either as style in squalor or squalor raised to high style. So, on quite another level, with the "black" Goyas of the painter's last period; they are massively ugly, with their rough cartoon-style and macabre themes, but in their giant energy they come very close to what used to be called the sublime—bypassing the beautiful altogether. Probably in Grand Guignol and the theater of cruelty we have an effect of ugly which neither transcends beauty nor is subordinate to it, but moves in another dimension and direction entirely. It's hard to say with assurance: premise a thoroughgoing sadist in the front row of spectators at a beheading—is the emotion he feels to be described as "esthetic"? And if not, why not?

When we try to bound the ugly by describing the limits of its compatibility, it starts to look completely unrestrictable. It combines with practically anything. We can all think of naive and self-conscious uglies, of joyous, fearful, shamefaced, witty, good-natured, vicious, jolly, lascivious, and puritanical uglies. Taking color from various emotions and stylistic shadings, or contributing its own color to them, ugly resists limitation because it is so fluid and absorbent a quality. It's arguable that an artist of distinction, like the supreme creator himself, never makes anything ugly all the way through—that, even in spite of himself, some element of distinction and intelligence remains as a corolla around his ugly, or a light interfusing it. The supremely and unredeemably ugly, in a word, is created in perfect good faith and complete assurance; not a shadow of ulterior motive contaminates it. To be so absorbed in his subject that he can see nothing wrong with himself or it—this is the fate of the mawkish poet, the architect responsible for academic buildings, and the maker of souvenirs for sale in airport terminals. What gives depth to this ugly is precisely the viewer's desperate hope that at some level or other he will find a rationale for it, in the form of a controlling intelligence. He lives in the purely ugly as a dark labyrinth which absorbs his thought by continually standing at an ungainly, disconcerting angle, as if it were not to be grasped by thought at all—as it isn't.

Ultimate ugly is, after all its feints and delusions of meaning, a shaggy-dog experience; one escapes from it with a sense of absolute alienation, of being defeated at every level. Its strength, like that

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of Milton's Chaos, lies in total weakness, in a calm and complacent torpor of self-absorption. When it rages and gesticulates, with fiendish tusk and beastly claw, ugly proclaims itself, in effect, The Antagonist, and thus bears witness to the Law; it is a mere counter-energy, however impressive. But when it sits in its chair, slowly squirming and yawning and scratching, an obese, immense, immobile figure—like the Senate Office Building, in Washington, D.C.—then it is sunken rather than blatant ugly, and supreme of its kind.

Obviously, there is no place in the world where, if you search through the sewers, and watch vigilantly at the slaughter-houses, you won't be confronted with a good deal of ugliness and filth. And the habit of nosing it out (which might be referred to as the *Mondo-Cane* syndrome) is at least as common as any other variety of sado-masochistic fixation. Being thus fixed in the eye of the beholder, it is less deep ugly, less absorbing, than an ugly which isn't so intentional—though, obviously, it may be no less shocking. Ultimate ugly is in some way global; it doesn't simply repeat a single element, but has an oppressive and massive structure, from which the victim can see he won't easily escape. The novels of Theodore Dreiser, Marxist political speeches, the epics of Robert Southey, the landscape of northern New Jersey—these have the special qualities of an ugly which is at once settled into itself and yet bound to go on and on, almost interminably.

It would be ridiculous to exclude from a discussion of the increasing autonomy of ugly the possibility that the world really is getting uglier, from year to year. People on the average and in large aggregates tend to be pretty ugly, there are more of them than ever before, the ideologies encourage them to think well of themselves, therefore to expatiate largely (under the rubric, "as long as you're comfortable"), and technology makes it necessary for them to work in hives (Tokyo, London, Chicago), while enabling them to cluster in standardized resort-colonies (Waikiki, Miami, the Riviera). Mass production of basics like steel, petroleum-products, and chemicals—not to speak of mass disposal of civilization's wastes—doesn't seem conceivable without a certain amount of deliberate squalor. Civilization rises out of a mountain of garbage, into which it is continually subsiding.—But in this concise formula, it seems clear, an attitude is expressed, rather

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than a set of facts. Man has been excreting and polluting for some time now: much modern awareness of this distressing condition seems forced and *voulu*. We wouldn't emphasize civilization as an affair of tatters and garbage, if we hadn't first decided that we ourselves are compounded of tatters and garbage—that laying claim to this inauthentic and corrupt status is the most authentic option open to us.

Thus, if shit—both the word, the substance, and the self-corruption that both symbolize—has domesticated itself at the center of our cultural consciousness, it's partly because the world *is* befouling itself at an extraordinary rate. But it's also partly as a kind of bad-faith way of establishing good faith. We talk openly about what has traditionally been unmentionable to show that we are above the genteel conventions. The once-unspeakable word is a shorthand way of displaying how genuine we are, how free of the suffocating influences, how *real*. The whole tactic is as devious, and as self-defeating, as the parable of the Cretan liar, or that classic epic of mendacity in a nutshell: "You tell me you're going to Pinsk so I'll think you're going to Minsk, but I happen to know you *are* going to Pinsk, so why do you lie to me?"

Ugly thus becomes "beautiful"—at least in the loose sense—because it is true. Keats's outrageous proposition about beauty and truth is fulfilled by being stood on its head. The opposite of "beautiful-ugly" and "true" is then "plastic," a word summarizing qualities of glossy fraud and empty pretension found, for example, in Holiday Inns, urban-renewal projects, and nineteenth-century mortuary sculpture. "Plastic" joins "ugly" with "beautiful" by constituting itself the opposite of both, and accepting the onus of fraud as well. This particular twist of terminology seems perhaps too cute to last for long; but it has at least the merit of distinguishing masked ugly, which is ugly in depth, from a frank and manly ugly, Lincoln-ugly as we could call it.

I do not know if one should associate the cult of ugly with the art of shock as cause or effect; but that there's an intimate connection of some sort seems hard to doubt. It has been traditional to poor-mouth the art of shock (the art which appeals to abrupt sensations of loathing, horror, and probably lust, art whose quality is kinetic) as being short-term in its effect; perhaps there has been some carry-over to the concept of ugly itself. I confess to some diffi-

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culty in envisaging a man who over a period of years systematically cultivated the art of shock in all its several aspects. We might find him in a room lined with paintings by Francis Bacon (the specialist in butchered corpses), listening to screaming rock while rereading *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. The very tempo of his living, with its relaxed routines, would contradict an art of apocalypse, demanding total concentration and a sense of the ultimate. Can one repeat the same shock-effects without wearing out the response, perhaps even dulling the organs of perception? As rock-addicts go deaf, devotees of strobe-light shows may go blind. There seem to be limits to a shock-response—which isn't, of course, to imply that other forms of art are limitless. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, played uninterruptedly and with maximum feeling for 24 hours, would send most of us up the wall. If shock-art seems to reach the limits of the bearable sooner than other art, one reason may be that it's more concentrated and more limited: it seems to focus on a single nerve and hammer it unremittingly.

Any art which consists primarily of assault is bound to rely on the ugly, beauty being traditionally committed (as Burke said long ago) to ingratiation, even seduction. In artfully positioned spots (as when that slimy, viscous monster is dragged out of the sea to goggle at Marcello, at the end of *La Dolce Vita*), the shock exactly completes and summarizes the preceding human developments. But in an unbroken stream of deliberate uglies, like *Mondo Cane*, the fascination of discovery, after the first time around, gives way to what? I suspect original nausea gives way to nostalgia for nausea, which is a pretty feeble artifice unless (on another level altogether) one is really sick.

The autonomy of the ugly, then (in the sense of independence of the beautiful) turns out to be limited and conditional rather than absolute. But ugly isn't, for that or any other reason, secondary to some supposedly "primary" esthetic mode. Even though all shock art depends on the ugly, not all ugly is shock-ugly. The novels of Zola raise ugly to the grandeur of epic form; a poem by Karl Shapiro on the fly ("Oh hideous little bat, the size of snot") gives it the sharpness of a lyric cry: we read in the *Spectator* (No. 17) of an Ugly-Club, whose members when they convened must have had many a warm human confidence to exchange. Particular forms of ugly may even be barnacled over with a rich fauna of implicated,

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and by no means unpleasant, associations. The small-town New England protestantism of my largely untheological youth is encrusted with oyster-yellow and cabbage-green stained glass, festooned with wailing, half-hearted choirs. Ugly in this awkward, ungainly dimension can become human and endearing. I should have been over-awed by the Parthenon or the great cathedral at Chartres; but the First Congregational Church was just ugly enough to be comfortable.

Perhaps ugly is not really ugly when we feel this way about it. The point doesn't cry out for instant resolution. Among other things, it obviously depends on our presumptions—whether we define the esthetic object in formal or psychological terms. But apart from premises, which are largely discussable, there's also at issue here the whole devious economy of esthetic pleasure and discrimination. For some people there's plainly a special pleasure in calling an object ugly, even in preference to some other available term. It needn't be *Schadenfreude*—more like a declaration of personal superiority and distance, combined with a puritanism of the feelings, as if not-to-be-deceived were an ultimate of some sort. But it's one of many moot areas in the slithery natural history of a subject which has been less nibbled by the long-eared critics than one might expect. I've taken only a snail's survey of the topic, and set it aside for the moment with a sense that its only limitations lie in the sheer multiplicity of its aspects, the indigestible wealth of detail with which it confronts us.

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WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN

Haydn Recovered

In a short essay called "Haydn the Inaccessible," prefaced to the analyses of eleven late Haydn symphonies in the first volume of *Essays in Musical Analysis* (1935), D. F. Tovey lamented the fact that Haydn, alone among great composers, had been overlooked in the late-nineteenth-century furor of editing that produced *Gesamtausgaben* of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and many lesser men. The lack of such an edition, said Tovey, kept us from getting a clear view of the transition from the Baroque to the classical style, which he called "the most interesting and important chapter in the whole history of music." Almost forty years later there is still no complete edition of Haydn, but enormous progress has been made, particularly in the last twenty years, and the view has cleared considerably as a result.

The area of Haydn's work in which this progress is most evident is the one in which it was needed most: the symphonies. The Eulenburg miniature scores of the string quartets, periodically reedited, have been more or less steadily in print over the years, as have large playing editions of the piano sonatas and piano trios (editions which now, incidentally, can be had, photographically reduced, in very cheap miniature scores from Lea Pocket Scores). Miniature scores of the Paris and London symphonies (Nos. 82-87 and 93-104 respectively) and of a few other late symphonies also have long been readily available. But scores of the vast majority of the first 81 symphonies have been extremely hard to come by. The critical edition that Breitkopf and Härtel finally did undertake in 1907, under the editorship of Eusebius Mandyczewski and later of Helmut Schultz, besides establishing the still accepted list of 104 symphonies, managed to produce scores of the first 49 in four volumes before expiring in the 1930's. But of course these volumes were expensive and available only by subscription, along with the volumes of other works issued in the edition. In 1950 the Haydn Society of Boston resumed the project under the leadership of H. C. Robbins Landon, who revised and published the editions of Nos. 50-57

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that Schultz had prepared for Breitkopf and Härtel. Again, however, the volume was only available by subscription, and anyway Nos. 58-81, Haydn's symphonic output during the crucial years 1775-84, still remained almost wholly unavailable in any form. Then in 1955 appeared Robbins Landon's monumental work *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn,* which was followed in the mid-sixties by the publication, at last, of all 107 symphonies —the 104 on Mandyczewski's list plus two recently discovered very early ones, usually known as "A" and "B," and the *Sinfonia concertante* of 1792—in a format and at a price appropriate to ordinary music-lovers. The Universal-Philharmonia miniature scores are available either singly, at about $1.80 a symphony, or in twelve handsome bound volumes that sell for the quite reasonable price of $12.00 each and can be bought individually. The story of how Robbins Landon painstakingly tracked down early manuscripts in obscure middle-European monasteries in preparing this edition is one of the great scholarly adventure stories of modern times, but one that need not be retold here. It is enough to acknowledge the vast debt we all owe him.

In recent years there has in fact been something of a Haydn boom, no doubt mainly owing to the achievement and influence of Robbins Landon, who is now preparing critical editions of the string quartets and piano trios. Just over a year ago, reviewing Charles Rosen's *The Classical Style* in these pages, I complained that only two of the late piano trios were available on records. Suddenly there is a set of the last sixteen, beautifully played on contemporary instruments, that can be ordered from The Musical Heritage Society, 1991 Broadway, New York 10023. And as if that weren't enough, Philips has announced a complete version, played by the excellent Beaux Arts Trio, which should be even better than the Musical Heritage Society set if the two records issued so far are a fair sample. There are also available recordings of all the quartets and piano sonatas and late masses, and live performances of all of Haydn's music have grown much more frequent. Boulez has been doing a good deal with the Philharmonic, and Ozawa, who has gone so far as to say that he hopes to conduct all the symphonies before he dies, has announced that the Boston Symphony will be programming more Haydn in the next few years. More surprisingly, in a recent issue of *The New Yorker* Andrew Porter cited a checklist of operatic

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repertory according to which there were 84 performances of Haydn operas in the United States between 1966 and 1972: although most of us hardly ever think of Haydn as an opera composer, this was a far greater number of performances than was accorded either Gluck or Weber, whom we think of almost solely as opera composers, and very important ones at that.

But perhaps the most astonishing evidence of Haydn's growing popularity is the attention the symphonies have recently received from the recording industry. As with the scores, recordings of the Paris and London symphonies and of a few others have long been available, while almost all of the earlier ones have been ignored. But now, incredibly, all 107 have been recorded not once but twice! A Musical Heritage Society set, by Ernst Maerzendorfer and the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, has already been issued in full on 49 LP's; and a London set, by Antal Dorati and the Philharmonia Hungarica, has been fully recorded but only partially issued, Nos. 36-92 and the *Sinfonia concertante* being currently available in this country with the others promised soon. There is also an Odyssey eight-record set of Nos. 1-22, all but one of which are taken from the late Max Goberman's projected complete version. And there are many excellent new single recordings of the most important of these hitherto virtually unhearable works.

The oddest consequence of Haydn's comparative inaccessibility in scores, records, and live performances was that most people never thought of him as an artist who underwent any sort of development. Every child interested in music quickly learns that Beethoven had three (or was it five?) "periods," that Wagner triumphantly "progressed" from *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser* through *Tristan* and the *Ring* to *Die Meistersinger* and *Parsifal,* and that even Mozart, in his short life, managed to improve. But although we loved the few Haydn symphonies we knew, it never occurred to me or to my friends who were interested in music, growing up in the forties, that there might be interesting differences between early Haydn and late Haydn. There was in fact no thought of early or late Haydn, there was simply Haydn: "Papa" Haydn, a static known quantity, the first link in the chain that leads through Mozart to Beethoven and Schubert and so to the Romantics. Even the numbering of the symphonies conspired to obscure the very fact

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(let alone the character) of Haydn's development. Mandyczewski's list was published in 1907, but as late as the forties the symphonies were often still referred to by the old numbering system according to which 1 is Mandyczewski's 103, 2 is 104, 3 is 99, 4 is 101, and so on, the late masterpieces thus being made to look like early works that miraculously sprang forth full-blown. This numbering system is still followed in the four-hand piano reductions of the symphonies, and my 78-rpm copy of Toscanini's 1929 "Clock Symphony" (No. 101), probably pressed in the late thirties or early forties, stoutly declares itself "Symphony No. 4." Also, there was (and in fact still is) neither a reasonably reliable contemporary list of publishers' opus numbers (as with Beethoven) nor a subsequently compiled scholarly catalogue of works (as with Mozart) by which Haydn's achievements in one genre could be easily related to those in others. Thus even today, most people who know perfectly well how the symphonies of Mozart and Beethoven line up chronologically with their chamber music and concertos and operas can't tell you, even if they know and love Haydn, what symphonies he was writing when he wrote the Opus 20 or 33 or 76 quartets, or the great piano sonatas in A-flat and C minor, or *The Creation* and *The Seasons.*

Now a moment's thought of course makes clear how inconceivable it is that any artist who had as long and active a career as Haydn did, and who was great enough to compose those last symphonies, should not have had some sort of development, should not have come from somewhere. Yet my friends and I were not alone in thinking of Haydn in this very peculiar way. Tovey cites a patronizing reference, in the first edition of *Grove's Dictionary,* to the "Surprise Symphony" (which was written in 1791, the year of Mozart's death, when Haydn was almost sixty) as an "early work." And there is a passage Robbins Landon is fond of quoting, from an essay of Aldous Huxley's, in which Huxley, who sometimes wrote very well about music, thus sums up Haydn's career: "Haydn lived to a ripe old age and his right hand never forgot its cunning; but it also failed to learn a new cunning. Peter Pan-like, he continued, as an old man, to write the sort of thing he had written twenty, thirty and forty years before." Since it is in the symphonies that we can most clearly trace Haydn's development, it is the present blessed availability

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of both scores and recorded versions of his whole symphonic canon—and especially of the neglected first 81, to which I shall confine myself here—that best demonstrates the falsity of Huxley's statement and enables us at last to begin reading that chapter of which Tovey spoke.

Despite the gratitude that is due them for their efforts, it must be admitted at once that Dorati, Maerzendorfer, and Goberman are not first-rate conductors with first-rate orchestras at their disposal. Even in the best of their performances one finds rhythmic uncertainties, ragged and uninflected string playing, badly balanced tuttis, fluffed horn notes, and so on. Moreover, all such marathon recording projects are subject to a certain unevenness: some works will inevitably be of special interest to the conductor and will consequently receive more than their share of care and attention, with the result that the others will be treated somewhat casually. Though Dorati has a tendency to softness and slackness, he seems to me the best of the three conductors and his orchestra is at least as good as the others. Moreover, the recorded sound of the Goberman records is dated and the playing generally unexpressive, and Maerzendorfer makes the very serious mistake of not using a harpsichord consistently in the early symphonies. Therefore to those who want to acquire a complete version, I recommend buying the Dorati volumes now available and waiting for his performances of the earliest symphonies rather than buying Goberman's or Maerzendorfer's. Dorati's version also has the advantage of program notes by Robbins Landon that incorporate some of his most recent discoveries (for example that the very important No. 48 was composed several years earlier than had been thought, in 1768 or 1769 rather than 1772).[1]

But the best way to get to know unfamiliar music, especially

[1] Maerzendorfer is clearly wrong not to use a harpsichord in the earliest symphonies because their bare harmonic textures badly need the filling out offered by a continuo. Yet it is very helpful to hear these curious transitional works without harpsichord: since to most modern ears the sound of a harpsichord automatically suggests Baroque music, its absence leaves one freer to hear anticipations of the later symphonies. Conversely, it can be helpful to hear the late symphonies with a harpsichord—if only to realize that it is an irrelevant distraction and should be omitted. The discovery of the little harpsichord solo that Haydn played in the London premiere of No. 98 has recently inspired conductors like Leslie Jones and Denis Vaughan to record the Paris and London symphonies with harpsichord continuo, and in a recent issue of the *Haydn Jahrbuch* a group of learned men prefaced a discography of the pre-London symphonies with the

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music that has as many unevennesses of its own as do Haydn's early and middle symphonies, is in performances that are as fine and as polished as possible. Therefore a better starting-point might be the three superb Philips records by Raymond Leppard and the English Chamber Orchestra which offer Nos. 22, 26, 34, 39, 47, 48, 70, and 77. The performances have occasional unidiomatic details, but every tempo and nuance has been sensitively and thoroughly thought out and carefully rehearsed. The playing is beautifully shaped and articulated throughout, and the recorded sound is sumptuous. Also, since Leppard has chosen an excellent and representative assortment of symphonies, one can get a pretty good idea from these records of Haydn's development between 1764 and 1782.

No. 22 in E-flat is remarkable for the orchestral textures of the powerfully solemn *adagio* first movement from which the work gets its nickname, "The Philosopher." In an intriguing experiment that he never repeated, Haydn scored this symphony for two English horns (instead of the usual oboes), two horns, and strings, with bassoon doubling the bass line and harpischord continuo. For the first half of the opening movement the strings provide a steady unison walking-bass accompaniment as the horns and English horns exchange grimly noble ceremonial pronouncements. The contrasting second section begins quietly with the muted first and second violins interweaving lines that repeatedly clash and resolve, and when the pronouncements of the opening reenter, in a sort of recapitulation, they are balanced and softened by the occasional alternating reappearances of the violin dissonances. The effect is a stunning one, the final fusion of the two contrasting textures resolving the dramatic con-

admission that "the employment of a harpsichord in all Haydn's symphonies, whether early or late, is a practice which commends itself to us more and more." Still worse, four seasons ago the brilliant and usually dependable Michael Tilson Thomas led the Boston Symphony in otherwise excellent performances of No. 98 in which the harpsichord was not used discreetly, as it usually is by Jones and Vaughan, but very "imaginatively": in the finale it busily filled in every chink between Haydn's carefully placed and balanced phrases with little flourishes and responses of its own, debasing the movement's exquisite wit to a kind of Three Stooges slapstick. Here we appear to have a situation exactly the reverse of throwing out the baby with the bath: in order to get the treasured eleven solo bars in the finale of No. 98, we may be forced to put up with wall-to-wall harpsichord in all the symphonies. Robbins Landon and Rosemary Hughes (whose excellent little book on Haydn in the Master Musicians series is still the best introduction to the composer) agree that the cut-off date for the harpsichord should be about 1770. Rosen has some very illuminating remarks on this problem in *The Classical Style*, pp. 193-196.

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flict of the movement. The second movement is a gay and dashing *presto,* but the minuet and finale are a bore.

There are other fine moments in the earliest symphonies: besides the fairly well-known (and, I think, overrated) triptych Nos. 6, 7, and 8 (*"Le Midi," "Le Matin," "Le Soir"*), Nos. 12, 15, 16, 20, and 21 each have an impressive movement or two. But most of these works, with their emptily cheerful fast movements and their plodding slow movements, are only of historical interest—though of course their historical interest is considerable. The opening movement of No. 22 is the first place in the Haydn symphonies where we encounter real emotional power, and in the years that immediately followed its composition in 1764 he resolutely (though with characteristic caution) began to strive for increased emotional intensity. This he did mainly in a series of three symphonies in the minor that lead directly to the so-called *Sturm und Drang* works of the early 1770's. Since the preoccupation with direct emotional intensity that marks the *Sturm und Drang* period is the biggest surprise to the student of Haydn's development who knows only the more genial later works, it is very fortunate that Leppard chose to record all three of the minor symphonies of the late 1760's.

The first one, and the first symphony Haydn ever wrote in a minor key, is No. 34 in D minor, an extremely (though interestingly) uneven work composed about 1766. The first movement, like that of No. 22, is an *adagio,* but instead of decisively establishing itself as such from the outset, it has a tentative character that makes it sound like an early instance of the slow introduction that was to become one of the hallmarks of the later Haydn. Therefore when we reach a *fermata* on the dominant at bar 18, we expect a vigorous *allegro* to clear the air. But instead we get a long dull aria in the major. Despite occasional moments of power when the music returns to the minor, the rest of the movement sounds as though Haydn didn't know how to finish what he had started and could only go on mechanically filling out the form. In the three following movements, none of which is very interesting, he retreats to the security of D major, as if acknowledging that the experiment had been a mistake.

No. 26 in D minor, composed two years later and known as the *"Lamentatione,"* is a different case altogether. The first movement, *allegro assai con spirito,* begins with violently syncopated

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figures over an aggressively striding bass, which lead, through a series of poignant transitional phrases, to a nobly declaratory second subject Robbins Landon has shown to have been taken from the plainsong melody that depicts the crucifixion in the liturgy for Holy Week. In one set of manuscript parts that he turned up in an Austrian monastery the symphony is actually titled *"Passio et Lamentatio,"* and since the beautiful second movement is based on the Gregorian chant *Incipit lamentatio Jeremiae,* also part of the Holy Week services, it seems clear that the first two movements were in some way connected with a drama played during Holy Week. The finale, surprisingly, is a grim D minor minuet that probably has no religious significance whatever but makes a fitting conclusion to this powerful work.

Finally there is No. 39 in G minor, also composed in 1768. The first and last movements are genuinely tense and dramatic, but the second movement is a creaky *andante* that could have come from a much earlier work, and the minuet is spoiled by a very routine trio.

Evidence that tumultuous emotional intensity is not the only thing Haydn was striving for in these years is offered by Nos. 48 and 47. The former, known as the "Maria Theresia," is a fine full-blown example of what Robbins Landon calls Haydn's C major "festival" symphonies. As against the rather impersonal pomp of the earlier members of this group (Nos. 20, 32, 33, 37, 38, and 41), No. 48 has a first movement that combines spaciousness and wit, power and grace, so as to give us one of our first clear glimpses of what the greatest Haydn symphonies will be like. The other movements are almost equally good: a gracious *adagio* that only occasionally loses its way, a minuet with a humorously ominous, grumbling trio in C minor, and a sparkling comic opera finale.

No. 47 in G major, composed a few years later in 1772, is also a clear precursor of the last great symphonies. One of the few important things on which Leppard can be faulted is his use in this symphony of the harpsichord, which sounds utterly out of place in the midst of Haydn's newly rich and varied orchestration, as annoying and irrelevant as the ticking of a metronome. Also, Leppard's tempo in the opening movement is a little fast: coupled with the clatter of the harpsichord, it makes the music sound too briskly businesslike, and the performance misses the

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comic note of martial self-importance that Dorati, with a slightly slower tempo and no harpsichord, catches perfectly. More important, though Leppard takes only about twenty seconds less with the movement than Dorati, that's just enough to make the development section go by too quickly and to diminish the effect of the movement's most brilliant event: a recapitulation in the tonic minor that just for a moment makes the gay march-like figures of the opening sound ominous and threatening. The other movements, which are equally good, include an extraordinary technical tour de force, a minuet so contrived that the second strain is a mirror image of the first strain and the second strain of the trio a mirror image of its first strain. Even before you know this, there is something irresistibly and indefinably comic about the movement, and it turns out to be traceable to the ludicrous double symmetry.

A considerably more serious use of strict forms for expressive purposes can be seen in No. 70 in D major (1779). The first movement, like so many in middle and late Haydn, is brilliantly constructed out of very little substance: a pair of two-note and three-note descending figures that make their appearance immediately in the terse opening unison statement. It is an extraordinarily energetic and concentrated movement, and evidently Leppard felt that it was too short, for he repeats the development and recapitulation. The score gives one the option of doing this with virtually all of Haydn's symphonies, but in all but the earliest ones it is usually a mistake, particularly if the development is as powerful as it is here. Dorati is surely right in not taking the repeat. The second movement is a canon in double counterpoint, but it never gives us the sense of mere mechanical elaboration that we so often have in earlier symphonies when Haydn is working his way through some formal pattern or other. Tender, courtly, and darkly mysterious, the movement gains a special dignity and poignancy from the strictness of its formal scheme. The minuet is routinely robust, but has a touchingly naive, folksonglike trio. The finale, in D minor, begins with a bit of comic opera intrigue but suddenly turns into a strenuous triple fugue of great seriousness and intensity, finally ending in the major.

With No. 77 in B-flat (1782) we finally arrive at mature Haydn. For the first time, in this group of symphonies, there are

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no lapses or awkwardnesses, no point at which melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic movement are out of phase with each other, no note (in fact) that one could wish changed. The only questionable detail in Leppard's splendid performance is his allowing the cellos and basses to disobey the score and play pizzicato in the jazzier parts of the finale. This sounds fine at first, but comes to seem a bit flashy and contrived after one hears Dorati's generally inferior but quite good performance, in which the cellos and basses play with the bow throughout the movement. As generations of New Orleans bassists have known and shown, a bowed last chorus can swing just as much as a plucked one.

There are several other single records of important symphonies that should be mentioned. The only one in the same league with Leppard's is the Philips record of the exciting No. 52 in C minor and the somewhat less interesting No. 53 in D major (*"L'Impériale"*) by Neville Marriner and the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. A more tense and nervous, almost equally good performance of No. 52 by Harry Newstone and the Haydn Orchestra is on London L'Oiseau Lyre, paired with the fascinating No. 46 in B major, in which Haydn reintroduces the minuet into the midst of the finale. Of the earlier symphonies, a Vanguard record has good performances of Nos. 30 and 31, both from 1765, by Hans Swarowsky and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra. There's a lot of dullness in these works, but No. 30, though not a true "festival" symphony because it doesn't include trumpets and timpani, has some fine moments and gives a good idea of Haydn's earlier C major mode. It is therefore interesting to compare with No. 48. No 31 in D major, known as "The Hornsignal" and interesting mainly for the experimental way in which Haydn writes for its four horns (very unusual in the Esterházy orchestra), gets a more brilliant and expressive performance than Swarowsky's from Leslie Jones and the Little Orchestra of London on Nonesuch.

Jones deserves special mention here because he has recorded so many Haydn symphonies—over forty of them. His versions of Nos. 26, 34, 39, and 77 don't seem to me to offer serious competition to Leppard's, but where there is no Leppard recording, Jones is often well worth listening to, especially for the very important *Sturm und Drang* symphonies. When he is in competition with Dorati, in fact, he sometimes comes out ahead, as

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for example with No. 44 in E minor, the *"Trauer"* or "Mourning" symphony. Despite a coarseness of tone and execution characteristic of Jones's records, his harsh straightforwardness is more suitable to the austerity of this music than is Dorati's more soft-edged approach. Dorati's version of No. 49 in F minor, known as *"La passione"* because of some forgotten connection with Holy Week, is perhaps a little better because of the grief-stricken heaviness of the *adagio* first movement, which Jones can't quite match, and the vigor and suppleness of the second movement. But Jones's performance, despite minor sloppinesses, is very good indeed. Dorati is clearly better in No. 45 in F-sharp minor, the "Farewell," because of the energy he imparts to the opening movement, which Jones takes at a surprisingly sleepy tempo. And Dorati's suavity and gentleness are more appropriate to a non-*Sturm und Drang* work like No. 43 in E-flat, the "Mercury," particularly to its moderately paced first movement, which Jones allows to fall apart rhythmically. Finally, another important symphony of which Jones offers the only available recording (except for Maerzendorfer's, which I have not been able to hear) is the charming and sophisticated No. 35 in B-flat, composed in 1767 and perhaps the first genuinely witty Haydn symphony. Though Jones is occasionally so rushed and hectic in the opening and closing movements that the comedy can't play itself out naturally and effortlessly, the performance is a good one, swift and brilliant.

The fact that as early as 1767 Haydn could write a symphony like No. 35, in which the influence of operatic comedy is so evident and pays off so well, is very important to anyone interested in his development. Haydn scholars, intent on rescuing their man from the "Papa Haydn" pigeonhole, have tended to lay disproportionate stress on the violence and intensity of the *Sturm und Drang* period and to play down the sociability, charm, and intrigue that Haydn, like Mozart, learned to express through his operatic experience—experience that in Haydn's case was more extensive, both as composer and conductor, than most people realize. But these latter qualities, as we can see from No. 35, were central to his musical personality even early in his career. One would not want to say of him, as Tovey said of Mozart, that his "whole musical language is, and remains throughout, the language of comic opera." But the bustle and gaiety of the

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theater were as important as the emotional intensity of the *Sturm und Drang* works in freeing Haydn from the slick, stolid, and impersonal "pre-classical" manner that pervades the earliest symphonies. And when he turned away from emotional intensity in about 1774 and began writing lighter and more elegant symphonies, it would seem reasonable to conclude that he did so in response to a need to charm and entertain that makes itself felt not only in No. 35 but also in symphonies like No. 47, written during the *Sturm und Drang* period.

All this is worth pointing out because Robbins Landon, dealing with these years in his great and influential book, presents an extreme version of the scholarly case. Of the symphonies of 1771-74 he writes: "In no other symphonies, except in the twelve composed for the British capital, did Haydn reach the high artistic standard achieved in the dozen or so within this small space of time." And of No. 39: "If the two middle movements were on the same artistic level as the outer allegros, we should have had one of Haydn's greatest symphonies." This exaggerated praise is matched by exaggerated distaste for the lighter and more elegant symphonies of 1774-84, to which Robbins Landon turns "with profound regret," pronouncing this period "a decade, which, taken as a whole, reflects little credit upon the composer." To explain what seems to him Haydn's unaccountable change of direction, Robbins Landon even feels called upon to postulate the dissatisfaction of Prince Nicolaus Esterházy with the turbulent minor-key symphonies of the late 1760's and early 1770's:

> In 1774 the breadth, the monumentality, the soaring freedom of thought which many of Haydn's compositions had been displaying seems not to have pleased the Prince at all. We may imagine him saying to Haydn, as another Prince Esterházy was to say to Beethoven many years later, on the occasion of the latter's Mass in C major being produced at Eisenstadt: "what has he done now?"

Thus the Prince demanded something more amusing, the composer acquiesced, and "the gradual disintegration of Haydn's artistic conscience" set in, a "spiritual deterioration" that eventually led him to "see the material advantages to be derived from pursuing such a course" and to adopt the "commercial attitude" that led to "the slick symphonic productions of 1781-1785."

In the absence of any hard evidence, all this talk about what "seems" to have displeased the Prince and what "we may imagine" him saying to poor Haydn is of course pure fantasy, aston-

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ishing in so distinguished and disciplined a scholar as Robbins Landon. It is really just the greater emotional intensity of the *Sturm und Drang* works on which he bases his contention that in them Haydn was left free to express his "real personality," "the true Haydn." Correspondingly, it is simply the fact that the symphonies of 1774-84 are less high-powered emotionally that leads him to believe that they must necessarily constitute a sell-out, first to the Prince and then to the public. The true Haydn, as we know him best of all from the last symphonies, is a very complicated fellow, and he won't be forced into so simple-minded a "Romantic" stereotype (which of course wouldn't work any better for a great Romantic composer like Berlioz or Schumann). Besides, any decade that produced symphonies like Nos. 70 and 77—and there are several others just as good—is not to be deplored, especially not in such heavily moralistic terms. Rosen is surely far closer to the truth in stressing "the discipline of comedy which transformed and enriched Haydn's style," and in seeing as signs of progress "the restraint put upon his most characteristically violent inspirations, and the new smoothness of surface" typical of the late 1770's.

In 1774 as throughout the rest of his career, then, Haydn was probably responding not to the demands of Prince Nicolaus but rather to those of his own restless and endlessly experimental nature, which was leading him gradually down the long path from the awkward scramblings and the *longueurs* of the early 1760's to the masterpieces of thirty years later. To retrace that path is exciting because one can follow so clearly the step-by-step—sometimes two steps forward, three steps back—process by which Haydn's imagination brought all musical elements under its control, simultaneously heightening both drama and fantasy, and achieving at last the synthesis of wit and high seriousness that constitutes both his personal greatness and that of the classical style itself. It's all there in the scores because he was perhaps the great slow learner among geniuses in the arts, and certainly no one's education ever took place more completely in public than his. Finally, an acquaintance with his first 81 symphonies leaves one with an intense desire to hear the best of them performed regularly by great conductors and great orchestras. There are at least thirty that would do credit to any orchestra's repertory; if they were to become an accepted part of our musical life Haydn would at last be as accessible as he deserves.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

SOME OF THE BEST STAGE WORK in New York today is being done by the Chelsea Theatre of Brooklyn, which produced David Storey's *The Contractor* at a newly converted house on Manhattan's uncouth far west side, a building that managed to live down its checkered past as a discothèque and church. Storey's play is minimal theatre, like his *Home* and *The Changing Room,* but with slightly more discernible shreds of plot adhering to the documentary structure. And structure it truly is: Ewbank, a Yorkshire contractor, has his men erect a marquee for his daughter's wedding (which, significantly, is not shown) in his suburban garden; later the structure is taken down again. The foreman and workers tease one another, bicker, and come to blows; the Ewbank family—gently pathetic elders, befuddled middle generation, and more or less alienated young—display their puzzlement, quiet cynicism, dislocation, or despair; somewhere in the invisible foreground, the city sprouts an ever more threatening Birnam Wood of TV antennas, encroaching on the view from the Ewbanks' hillside stronghold.

There is envy and dissension among the working-class contingent; uneasy comfort in the middle-class family. The wandering hippie Ewbank son wants to mingle with the workers, but isn't accepted by them; the overindulged daughter is marrying a ninny of a university man. The contractor feels exploited by his men; vaguely dissatisfied with his marriage to a somewhat soured, faded woman; and disturbed by the sense of life slipping away from him without his ever having grabbed hold of it properly, even as this festive occasion will never be repeated, even as his married daughter will now leave him. Old Mr. Ewbank senilely yearns for the hard-working austerity of his youthful days, while his gentle wife ministers to him with melancholy patience. Two wicked pranksters among the workers constantly team up against another, a serious chap, seemingly unhappily married, and against the foreman, once jailed for embezzlement, now trying desperately to regain respectability. And there is a simpleton, too, among them, hardly capable of work, but kept on out of charity, and alternatingly ridiculed and indulged by the rest.

Out of these elements, without ever allowing them to congeal into a real plot, Storey creates an atmosphere of general unfulfilment, unstable compromise, and poignancy, as slippery objects of desire elude hands drenched with the sweat of existential anxiety. And over it all looms the tent, whose erection, decoration, and dismantling constitute,

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respectively, the play's three acts. It becomes thus the embodiment of work, which is what finally keeps men from going totally purposeless, restless, mad; and also the emblem of the rise, culmination, and decline of all human endeavor, including life itself. The play talks around rather than into its theme: everything is indirection and implication, and very often only silence. There is a good deal of humor, more often raucous than gentle, and a rare bit of strangulated pathos, made more touching by its self-effacing brevity. In some ways this suggests a kinship with Pinter, but this is, happily, only superficial. Storey's pauses, non sequiturs, sudden changes of mood grow out of his conception of character: they represent genuine human weaknesses, hesitancies, derailments; in Pinter, these devices are calculated for effect, and represent undue cleverness on the part of the characters, and flashy prestidigitation on the part of the author. Pinter's weirdness is imposed from without, meant to stun the audience with the depth of its inscrutability; Storey's fumblings are those of people protesting against or subsiding into perplexity. Pinter tries to impress us; Storey impresses things on us. Pinter invents a teasing, distorted unreality; Storey allows the strangeness of ordinary reality to dawn on us, as when, let's say, we first see a hair under a microscope.

One more good thing about *The Contractor:* Storey, a man who has held many odd jobs, understands the intricacy and fascination of labor, which makes something come to be where, formerly, nothing was. He gets us pinstakingly involved with the minutiae of tent-building, and we are exhilarated to see the thing go up and proudly assert its existence. We are further thrilled to see how furnishings and decorations make a veritable, even if gaudy, environment out of the edifice. At last, when it is dismantled, we experience a keen sense of loss, transience, mortality. The acting and production values, including the difficult Midlands accents, were all most commendably managed in the Chelsea production, which lagged behind Lindsay Anderson's brilliant London one only in a couple of inferior performances, and in an occasional slackening of pace that the gifted young British director, Barry Davis, allowed to creep in.

At its regular home, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Chelsea followed this up with another winner, a revival of the musical *Candide*. This show has a sad history. At its première in 1956, it could boast a headily captivating score by Leonard Bernstein (who should stick to musical comedies rather than attempt serious compositions, which are musical tragedies), superior lyrics by Richard Wilbur with additions by John Latouche and Dorothy Parker, and a lavish production staged by Tyrone Guthrie, though not in his best vein. The real problem, however, was the book by Lillian Hellman. Miss Hellman can write wry, abrasive dialogue, but that is not the same as irony, satire, or even plain humor. Voltaire is as remote from her as Keats; worse yet, as a Jew, Miss Hellman felt clearly uneasy about poking fun at the

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Catholic church (and it may also be that Broadway was not considered ready for such things). So what should have been frothy spoofing or biting irreverence turned into ponderous pussyfooting. The show failed, and despite the goodly underground following built up by the original-cast album, failed again in a Kennedy-Center revival of 1972.

The Chelsea production is a thorough rethinking of *Candide*. There is a new book by Hugh Wheeler, and there are additional lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, while some of the old ones have been dropped or placed into new contexts, where they take on interesting new coloration. There is fresh and unassuming choreography by Patricia Birch, and lively direction by Harold Prince, who can stage musicals better than plays, and campily farcical musicals, apparently, best of all. Wheeler is not a writer I admire, but he had the good sense to return the book closer to Voltaire, and not hesitate camping it up. For in the attenuated medium of musical comedy, camp becomes a reasonable substitute for Voltaire's elegantly sardonic prose, and Stephen Sondheim's cleverness not only with the writing of a lyric, but also with fitting it into the spoken dialogue that surrounds it, is most likely unmatched by anyone these days. I haven't the space to show Sondheim's improvements, but I can give an example of Wheeler's. Voltaire has the fair Cunégonde divide her favors between the Holy Inquisitor and a rich Jew. In Hellman's book, these two are sterilized into a Sultan and a marquis, and the whole anti-religious joke is lost. Wheeler restores the Jew and the Inquisitor, but where Voltaire contents himself with writing, after Candide kills both his rivals, "they bury His Lordship in a beautiful church and they toss Don Issachar on the dump," Wheeler has the Old Lady lean down toward the Jew's corpse in the gutter, and lecture it in a wonderfully pedagogic tone: "There are advantages to being a Christian, after all!"

The production is helped immeasurably by the imaginative environment devised by Eugene and Franne Lee, who also designed the delectable sets and costumes. Both the audience and the orchestra are split up into several groups, the former sitting in separate, unidentical sections of bleachers all around, or on stools in a couple of pits; the latter seated either on platforms among the bleachers, or tucked away under them. On all sides there are bigger or smaller curtained stages or open platforms on different levels to act on; all these are connected by ramps that wind uphill or down, or cut straight across, or turn into drawbridges that can be raised and lowered. Actors sometimes perch on or hang from improbable ledges, or clamber, politely apologizing, through and over the spectators. The ramps provide the choreographer with ideal terrain across which to propel bizarre processions in diverse comic yet easy-to-manage dance movements.

Making the cast much smaller, and having even more doubling than in the original production, creates the feeling of a chamber work; introducing Voltaire as the chief narrator establishes a Voltaire-Pan-

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gloss antithesis far better than the Pangloss-Martin pairing of the Hellman version: why drag in another fictional antagonist when you can have the real, pungently skeptical author himself? Prince keeps the whole circus moving around and ahead jauntily, with many a vaudeville gag to speed it along. A young cast, mostly unknowns, works with exemplary enthusiasm, the charm of unspoiled ingenuousness, and healthy good looks not excluding some baby fat. The only better known performers are June Gable, who does the half-arsed Old Lady with lots of cheek; and Lewis J. Stadlen, who does Voltaire, Pangloss, and some others with a slight Jewishness that creeps into all of them, but otherwise sufficient discreteness, wit, and aplomb. My only regret is that one of Wilbur's best lyrics, the song about syphilis, dropped from the Broadway production, was not reinstated here.

Another institutional theatre was watched with greater interest but much lesser gratification. I refer to Joseph Papp's takeover of Lincoln Center's big Vivian Beaumont Theatre and the little Forum, now uneuphoniously named the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theatre, after a million-dollar donor. It is sad, but not altogether surprising, to report that Papp's opening bills proved plagues on both his houses. In the big one, Papp has taken it into his head to produce new plays, which are likely to rattle around cheerlessly in that mighty amphitheater; downstairs, in its tiny, cozy counterpart, he proposes to do Shakespeare in closet productions, necessitating, I fear, compression and cramping beyond recognition.

So Papp's Beaumont began with David Rabe's *Boom Boom Room,* on which the playwright worked on and off for several years, and which he now recognizes as unfinished. The production had a stormy incubation period: Santo Loquasto had to redesign and simplify the sets much against his wishes; Julie Bovasso, the director, was superseded by Papp himself in the last week of previews; Julie Newmar, in an important role, was fired and replaced by the relatively inexperienced Mary Woronov; even the title, originally *In the Boom Boom Room,* had its first two words dropped, though what really needed shortening was the three-hour play itself.

Rabe, a veteran of the Vietnam war, was inspired by it to write a brace of impressive plays. Away from that subject, however, he seems to be floundering: *The Orphan,* a sort of *Oresteia* crossed with a Charles Mansoniad, was a disaster; *Boom Boom Room* is a great, pointless bore. It proposes to examine what makes Chrissy, a Philadelphia shopgirl, turn go-go dancer, and later hit alleged bottom as a topless dancer in wicked old New York. Now the decline of the respectable young girl is at least as old a subject as *Manon Lescaut* and *Moll Flanders* (but think also of *The Changeling!),* and Rabe has precious few new things to say about it. Chrissy, it seems, is a lost soul because she has, (a) a crude, shifty, bullying father, now mostly complaining about his "prostrate" gland; (b) a hysterical mother who

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tried to abort her—"I was hesitant in my bouncing," she defends herself, "I could have bounced harder"; (c) difficulty in choosing between books on psychology and astrology, both of which she parrots to her intense confusion; and (d) bad luck with actual and potential boyfriends who turn out to be conventional petty bourgeois, bigoted ruffians, or homosexuals—to say nothing of the lesbian captain of go-go girls who unsuccessfully woos her with "It's really very nice . . . like you do it to yourself, only there's a surprise." But there are no surprises for the audience, and only unpleasant ones for Chrissy, despite all her obligingness: "I mean, if they want me for *that,* at least they want me."

As can be seen from the foregoing, the language is plausible enough, with the occasional increment of humor, as when the homosexual sperm donor laments "You think you have problems? Look at me: I have fifty or more kids running around loose in the world . . ." or Chrissy's truck-driver boyfriend proclaims defiantly, "I ain't prejudiced, I just hate niggers." But, as can also be seen, this is primitive humor, and insight trained on ground so riddled with previous insight that it crumbles beneath the tread of belated explorers. And when Rabe tries to create more unusual characters, like another, kinkier truck driver, they fail to ring true. The little verities the play seems to conquer for itself, such as Chrissy's remark about men, "They don't mean to hurt us, they just don't know how not to," are only retreads—even the heroine of *Liliom* was justifying her husband's slaps in similar terms. A little bit of the ordinary seen ordinarily goes a long way; *Boom Boom Room* gathers momentum only in the attempted lesbian seduction scene, and in a fight scene that attains unusual verbal and physical violence. In these scenes, at least, we are shown the ordinary from a new angle, or with increased intensity.

But the play is, above all else, wasteful. It presents us with a clutch of go-go dancers, in and out of their cages, as a kind of all-but-mute Greek chorus; if only it had used these characters, counterpointing and orchestrating them—turning them, perhaps, into absurdist or surreal figures—but no. They do not serve who only stand and frug. Papp's staging was pedestrian, and the acting generally uneven: Madeline Kahn, as Chrissy, had some good quiet moments, but also others in which specious rubatos, odd glottal stops, and falling into rhythmic ruts got much the better of her. Only Robert Loggia, as the truck-driver lover, created a memorable, totally believable brute; however, by the time I caught the play, the repulsive but not untalented Charles Durning had already been succeeded in the role of the father by the repulsive and untalented Will Hare.

Things went much worse yet downstairs. Here David Schweizer, only recently arrived from the Yale Drama School and Repertory Theatre, was engaged by Papp to direct *Troilus and Cressida.* Using a tiny cast in which even major roles were doubled or trebled, cutting

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the play to shreds, having the actors (hard to say whether deliberately or spontaneously) misread and garble their lines, Schweizer staged a mod and camp production in the manner of the Theatre of the Ridiculous. There was no cohesion even of preposterous styles or anti-styles: if Beeson Carroll played Hector as a travesty of a sheriff in a comic western, Christopher Walken was an Achilles out of a transvestite costume ball, lapsing into weird accents and going into battle naked but for a green feather boa, Aeneas' armament consisted of a baseball bat and a shield in the shape of a huge baseball; Agamemnon sported a helmet surmounted by a vulture whose head hung down to stare him in the eye. Madeleine LeRoux, the star of numerous underground plays and movies, played Helen as Marilyn Monroe, Cassandra as a demented Jean Harlow showing off lots of skin under fluttering garments, and Cressida as Mae West trying to go respectable; all three roles with absurd movements and inflections, more from incompetence than cleverness. Agamemnon's tent became a Turkish bath, with semi-disrobed Greeks among rising vapors; the trumpet calls were jazzy little melodies; William Hickey played Pandarus as a mincing and jigging queen, then, in full view of the audience, turned up his hood and played Calchas in exactly the same fashion. An insipid youth rattled through Troilus without touching on a single emotion; the grinning cadaver of a horse was sprawled across one corner of the stage throughout.

The innumerable horrors of the production did, occasionally, make you laugh, not the least at mispronunciations—as when the tall, thin Cressida was given to the Greeks in exchange for Antenor with the words, "Here is the lady which for antenna we do deliver you." It all goes to show what happens when the Kott-Brook-Grotowski method of rewriting the classics falls into still more incompetent hands. One wonders how many further horrors of this kind Robert Brustein and the Yale Drama School, with their Artaudian motto of "No more masterpieces," will foist on us in years to come. True, Yale also gave us Paul Zalon, the imaginative, though here often misguided, costume and set designer, and may also have taught the able lighting man, Ian Calderon, a thing or two; but can such peripheral assets mitigate the central insanity?

Other institutional theatres suffered similar setbacks. The American Place Theatre, which ended its last season with a piece of pretentious nonsense called *The Karl Marx Play,* by Rochelle Owens, who may easily be the most arrogant and untalented person enjoying respectable publication and production in these deluded days, began its current season with Ed Bullins' *House Party,* a sloppy collection of spoken and sung vignettes about Harlem life, and a feeble imitation of Melvin Van Peebles' *Aint Supposed to Die a Natural Death,* itself a feeble imitation of a play. Meanwhile The Circle in the Square followed up an undistinguished production of *The Waltz of the Toreadors*—in

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which the acting couple Anne Jackson and Eli Wallach demonstrated how high one can rise (and how low one can sink) in the American theatre without acquiring any flexibility of style, period sense, or cosmopolitan polish—with a revival of *The Iceman Cometh,* staged by the group's artistic director, Theodore Mann.

This *Iceman* is an even more instructive failure. Mann has not, in all his years of producing and directing, progressed beyond a certain competence; here he has blocked the play well enough, although to some extent leaning on a former Circle in the Square staging of it, by its one-time co-director, José Quintero. The set and costume design were, like the lighting, neatly executed. But by choosing poor actors, by miscasting decent ones, and by plain misdirecting (though Joseph Ragno's Rocky, Michael Higgins' Larry, Jack Gwillim's "Captain," and Jenny O'Hara's Pearl were fine creations), Mann allowed seemingly foolproof parts to go painfully wrong. Which taught us the useful lesson that nothing is unsabotageable in the theatre. A still more useful lesson was the casting of James Earl Jones in the central part of Hickey. Now Jones happens to be a poor actor—for two good performances, in *The Great White Hope* and *Boesman and Lena,* he has given twenty wretched ones—but that is not my point. Worse than the fact that Jones alternated between howls and whispers, usually howling where whispers might have been preferable and whispering where a howl would have made slightly better sense; worse than his grotesque slouching, shuffling, eyeball-rolling, overgesturing, and wholly idiosyncratic and meaningless mistiming of lines studded with cranky rubatos, was his mere black presence in a clearly white role. The part is, first of all, written for a specifically Hibernian salesmanly charm, for a precise sort of blarney, which its rhythms and modulations cry out for. A black man as the mentor of all these semiderelict whites, clinging to their delusions of respectability all the harder, is socially and psychologically inconceivable in 1912. Furthermore, any number of lines and situations set up irrelevant and misleading implications, and the other, intentionally black character in the play, Joe Mott, is thus made utter nonsense of, stripped of all his pathos by a black Hickey. This is what happens, however, when, out of deluded liberalism—if not out of downright commercial exploitativeness—black actors are insensitively shoved into unsuitable slots.

The New Phoenix Theatre began its repertory season (theirs, at least, is genuine repertory) scarcely less inauspiciously with Harold Prince's staging of Dürrenmatt's *The Visit.* To begin with, Prince used the abominable Maurice Valency version, an even more witless piece of edulcoration than Valency had previously inflicted on a couple of Giraudoux plays. A typical academic hack with theatrical pretensions, Valency was only too eager to oblige the Lunts, some years ago, with a flatter, simpler, more decorous adaptation of Dürrenmatt's more imaginatively demanding and misanthropically mordant original—

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though, on a recent rereading, even that struck me as slightly less marvelous than I remembered it. There is a perfectly respectable literal translation by Patrick Bowles, but I don't know whether Prince bypassed it out of ignorance, or whether Valency has, as rumored, a monopoly on English-language productions, extorted from an author in no position, at that time, to be choosy.

Be that as it may, Prince's staging managed to be neither realism nor stylization but a botch of both, and completely missed the predominant black humor (much of which Valency, of course, had already scuttled) and gave us, instead of the Nestroyesque production the author explicitly calls for, a kind of elephants' burying ground where scene after scene, like decrepit pachyderms, ponderously came to expire. Edward Burlingame's worthless set was an attempt at abstraction by someone with no feeling for it, and the company, with the possible exception of John Glover (who, however, was much too young to play the schoolmaster), remained uniformly uninspired. Most disconcerting was the usually excellent Rachel Roberts' crabbedly lackluster Clara Zachanassian, a performance to be blamed largely on the director. Broadway has never been kind to Dürrenmatt, but this was the unkindest cut, and mangling, of all.

Yet the group redeemed itself with the second production, *Chemin de Fer,* Suzanne Grossmann and Paxton Whitehead's juicily idiomatic rendering of Georges Feydeau's *La Main passe.* This is a trifle different from your usual Feydeau, in that, after three wildly farcical acts, it veers into a more sedate, even wistful, fourth, and becomes less effective for it. Nevertheless, it is, three quarters of the way, exemplary farce writing, which makes you enjoy the visible crafting, the build-up to the joke, almost as much as the payoff, no matter whether that climax comes as a surprise or as a fulfillment of your teased expectations. It is as if a master painter deliberately allowed the preliminary sketching to peep through the finished portrait, to show what mastery of the rapid line underlies the glorious elaboration of the end result. Particularly endearing is the ruthless rationality with which *Chemin de Fer* develops its characters' basic irrationalities, which is as ingenious and hilarious as taking a bunch of drunks and constructing out of their meanderings and titubations a precisely honed piece of choreography.

Stephen Porter directed with a bravura he can achieve only in farce, but there, at least in recent production, to a faretheewell. He has turned his actors into verbal and physical acrobats, their voices performing like one-man bands, their bodies like high-wire artists. Only John McMartin, as Fedot, runs out of tricks toward the end, and becomes more and more inappositely American; the others attain in every way the high standards set for Feydeau by the Comédie Française in the last dozen years, establishing the playwright as one of the supreme masters of a minor but endlessly diverting genre.

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There is no room left for other off-Broadway events, but more than enough to sum up the regular Broadway theatre. It produced mostly such watered-down musical rehashings as *Raisin,* from Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun; Molly,* from the old radio and television serial; *Gigi,* a further reduction of Colette by Lerner and Loewe, from their own movie musical; and an adequate, integrated revival of *The Pajama Game,* whose songs and dances continue to please. Of straight plays, however, only two have gained a foothold: *Veronica's Room,* Ira Levin's adaptation of another one of his horror stories, which could, at best, be considered Rosemary's Embryo; and *The Good Doctor,* in which Neil Simon adapts nine early Chekhov feuilletons into mildly vulgarized, not especially stageworthy skits, tossed together pell-mell. In between, Christopher Plummer, as the writer-narrator—a kind of fusion of Chekhov and Simon, which is like trying to make gefilte fish out of caviar—coyly expatiates about life, literature, and happy endings. Far better than these is *Good Evening:* Peter Cook and Dudley Moore doing some witty, often satirical, duologues of their own devising, interspersed with an occasional monologue or pianistic spoofing. It is only half the contingent of *Beyond the Fringe,* but more than half as funny, which is good enough. But if *Good Evening* is all Broadway proper can manage in half a season, then good night to it.

Addendum to Music Chronicle: In February, shortly after this account was written, Rafael Kubelik resigned his post as the Metropolitan's first musical director. He told the press that the house's financial plight made it impossible for him to carry out the changes to which he had committed himself. But the terms of his contract, which allowed him to retain his position as musical director of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Munich, had proved impractical as well: during the months he was in Europe, the mechanics of communication with him to secure his participation in artistic decisions were defeating. The Met's general manager, Schuyler Chapin, has publicly reasserted his intention of having a full-time musical director for the house, and the announcement of a new choice seems likely before the current season ends.—R.S.C.

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ROBERT S. CLARK

Music Chronicle[1]

GIVEN EVEN A PASSABLE PRODUCTION and a competent musical realization, Hector Berlioz's *Les Troyens,* staged for the first time in New York City by the Metropolitan Opera in October and November, was almost certain to be a *succès d'estime.* What the Metropolitan in fact gave its audiences was an attractively lavish production, a musical realization that was surely the equal of any of the work's recent revivals around the world, and something very close to a *succès fou.* I will begin with the production, which is, in my opinion, of only secondary importance in any successful operatic totality. Apart from the pointless and boring ballet in *Les Troyens à Carthage,* the second of the work's two parts, the direction and the designs were tasteful, pleasing to the eye, scrupulous—though not literal—in adhering to the composer's instructions and the implications of his music, and a credit to Nathaniel Merrill, the producer, to Peter Wexler, who was responsible for settings, costumes, and visual effects, and to the Met's new administration as a whole. Coming on the heels of the house's announcement that it faced its worst financial privations in forty years, the production was called by some extravagant (its budget was reported to be $400,000) and trivially ornate. This was more than mere carping: the animal symbolism of the processional scenes, intended to suggest the primitive forms of worship of the Trojan and Carthaginian societies, was a clever idea carried to excess, and the likenesses of bitch wolves suspended above the stage, foretelling the founding of Rome in which the myth culminates, were seen too often. But the sets were spare and suggestive: massive granitic shapes for fortress Troy and nets for seafaring Carthage—no excess here. Some of the costumes in the Carthaginian scenes evoked fairy-tale wizards rather than Tyrian hieratics, but they were mostly trim and effective. And it might silence critics of the production's cost to know that some costumes were second-hand, used originally in Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* many years ago. Moreover, Berlioz conceived the work, and particularly the crowd scenes, on a large scale: the score's title pages specify a huge orchestra and "about a hundred supernumerary choristers." *Les Troyens* is French grand opera, transfigured by Berlioz's imagination and infused with his musical genius, but French grand opera nonetheless, and spectacle is an important part of that tradition. When Berlioz called for a theatrical effect he wanted nothing stinted, and it is niggardly to suggest that the Metropolitan should not have met his requirements.

[1] For Addendum to this Chronicle, see preceding page.

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The opening was touted for its several "firsts": the work itself, Rafael Kubelik's conducting debut, and—far less important—the use of filmed projections, one of the vaunted techniques of opera direction's young turks, among whom Merrill is not ordinarily counted. On this occasion the effectiveness of the films was limited. The orchestral interlude "Royal Hunt and Storm," during which Dido and Aeneas' love is consummated after they find shelter in a cave, was accompanied by gratuitous helter-skelter images—thickets, figures running, horses cavorting—that subtracted from the impact of the beautiful musical episode. As for the Trojan horse, Berlioz's stage directions imply that it is not to be seen, but to "pass" offstage while the chorus sings of its progress to the temple of Pallas. Merrill and Wexler could not resist bringing it on, in the form of a projection, and proved once more that in such circumstances the viewer's imagination is more potent than any actual representation can be.

The musical achievement was more consistent. The chorus, of prime importance to Berlioz's epic vision, was splendid; it had been trained by John Nelson, a young American who himself conducted a fine concert performance of this opera in Carnegie Hall a few seasons ago. The orchestra played well for Kubelik, especially in the "Royal Hunt and Storm," but I occasionally missed the rhythmic crispness and sense of surging forward motion that fully release the music's latent ardor. (One reason for this may have been the overwork and exhaustion that sent the conductor to the hospital a few weeks after the opening.) All of the vocal roles were handled capably, and the leading parts a great deal better than capably. Berlioz's Aeneas, Cassandra, and Dido are not figures in a classical frieze, capable of realization on the stage with a few stylized vocal and physical gestures. They are, instead, products of his Romantic imagination, possessing the entire range of human moods and motives, and outsized passions (like Berlioz's own) scaled to their mythic stature. Furthermore, the music of these roles is difficult to execute: their range is unusual, they are rhythmically idiosyncratic, and more than anything else they require a skill rarely found among today's singers, the ability to make theatrical effect through declamation, to create a sense of inner life by coloring and shaping the score's abundant passages of accompanied recitative. On all counts the Metropolitan's principals were superb. Jon Vickers' tenor is subject to variation in the smoothness of its production, and too often he attacks notes by sliding up to them, but his voice has the requisite heroic metal and size. He has sung Aeneas often since he first undertook the part for Kubelik at Covent Garden in 1957, and he understands the role's requirements. Among the world's leading tenors he is one of the most musicianly, and his sense of line, rhythm, and articulation failed him only once at the first performance—unfortunately at the most telling point, Aeneas' aria *"Inutiles regrets,"* sung just before he abandons Dido. At a later performance he had its tricky phrases under better control. And, as usual, the visceral power of his singing was commanding.

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The performances I attended offered the distinct pleasure of hearing two major artists, Shirley Verrett and Christa Ludwig, as Dido. Miss Verrett, who sang Cassandra in both, filled in for the ailing Miss Ludwig at the opening performance and made of the evening a well-deserved triumph. In the role of Cassandra the cutting edge of her upper register and the thrust of her declamation combined in an arresting portrayal; her chest tones at the low end of her range may have been questionable stylistically but were thrilling dramatically. And she knows how to fit physical gesture to musical phrase naturally and forcefully. As Dido, she was less impressive. The long evening tired her, of course, and much of the lyrical writing for the Carthaginian queen lies in a somewhat weak and colorless stretch in the mid-range of her voice. Too often in these passages Miss Verrett simply could not muster enough volume to ride over the orchestra. But in musicianship and dramatic authority she measured up well.

Miss Ludwig has a clear advantage: her voice is an imposing natural instrument; Miss Verrett's, attractive as it may be, is not. I have admired Miss Ludwig in many roles but in none more than Dido. Though a trace of excessive vibrato afflicts a few mid-range notes, the best compass of her voice is employed by this role. Her timbre is fluid and rich, and by itself can suggest a repose and rapture that Miss Verrett's astringent tone cannot. The size of Miss Ludwig's voice was a better match too for the Berlioz orchestra and for Vickers in the languorous love duet that closes the fourth act (the second act in the Met's arbitrary arrangement). Equally important was her projection of the words, in excellent French, especially in the fierce and dolorous final scenes. She is not as sure as Miss Verrett in her stage deportment: some of it was conventional and some wooden. But in the scenes of Dido's immolation and apotheosis after Aeneas' departure, Miss Ludwig fused vocal power and sumptuousness, musicianship, and skillful gesture into a tragic summation seldom equalled in our opera houses. One usually cool-headed New York critic called her performance "simply one of the most beautiful creations ever to honor the Metropolitan's stage." That word "ever" takes in a lot of musical territory, but I share the sentiment that prompted it.

I suppose that cutting of the long score is inevitable if it is to be heard by a contemporary audience on a single evening. Kubelik's cuts were intelligently made, although they included the two scenes (Nos. 45 and 46 in the Bärenreiter score) that separate Aeneas' departure from Dido's resolve to kill herself. So we do not learn that Dido's sister and the Carthaginians believe that the queen intends only to make a sacrifice of Aeneas' toga, arms, and gifts to enlist the aid of the infernal gods in cursing his descendants. In fact, as the Met staged it, Anna, Narbal, and the others seemed to know from the start of the sacrificial scene (No. 49) that Dido would stab herself with Aeneas' sword, and their cries of *"Au secours!"* when she did so made no sense. But this was a small blemish on a memorable evening for any ardent Berliozian.

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The rest of the fall's operatic activity was on a lower plane of interest. At the New York City Opera, delayed in opening by a musicians' strike, three new productions vied for the critic's attention. I did not see Donizetti's *Anna Bolena,* a vehicle for Beverly Sills; I had seen Frank Corsaro's production of Delius' *Village Romeo and Juliet,* virtually identical even to the singers, when it appeared at the Kennedy Center in Washington in April of 1972, and presumably would find it as delightful now as I did then. Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* was the last of the three. It was tastefully and wittily staged by Sarah Caldwell, as if behind a Rococo chamber stage like Drottningholm for the Prologue, and subsequently on, around, and before it for the opera-within-an-opera. Julius Rudel conducted ably and a cast of mostly young singers was admirable. I was not very much troubled by the division of the work into an English translation for the Prologue and German for the "opera," for the decision to have the *commedia dell'arte* characters sing in English throughout their intrusions into the "opera" made sense of the division. Back at the Metropolitan, a new production of Rossini's early and formula-ridden *L'Italiana in Algeri* was distinguished by the confectionary lightness and sweetness of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's settings (but not his direction) and by Marilyn Horne. Her Rossini singing is one of the great musical pleasures right now: to hear her sail through the first-act showpiece *"Cruda sorte"* with her distinctive timbre and her secure and even scale work, the embellishments falling with just the right weight into a perfectly balanced and rhythmically vivid line, was enough to redeem an evening that otherwise ran from the barely adequate to the mediocre.

New music is plentiful in New York. The critic must allot time and attention to it with serene impartiality, but for the ordinarily curious and sensitive music lover the problem is how to know whether an evening will provide musical satisfaction or the kind of excruciating exercise in claustrophobic posturing the avant-garde often addresses to itself. In another chronicle I hope to consider the question of new music at length. For now I will confine myself to commenting upon two composers who represent polarities in contemporary composition. Early in November, the pianist David Burge gave the New York premiere of *Makrokosmos, Volume I,* "twelve fantasy pieces after the Zodiac for amplified piano," by George Crumb. Crumb, a remarkable artist, is currently riding the crest of the avant-garde wave, principally because of the acclaim for his *Ancient Voices of Children* (1970). The style of *Makrokosmos* is a compendium of fashionable techniques (no condescension intended): "collage" structures built out of successions of sonic "events," minimalism, allusiveness, electronic amplification, the direct striking, strumming, and plucking of the piano strings, vocalization and chanting by the performer ("Tempus, Animus, Veritas, Mors!"). Occasionally Mr. Burge seemed self-conscious in dealing with the requirements of the piece, but for the most part his performance was superb. Will the work survive Crumb's current vogue? No one can be sure. Crumb has dealt cannily with the possibilities that lie in ex-

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tending the sonic range of the instrument. But for at least this listener, the piece's most expressive moments were those that used the piano's traditional resources.

At the other end of the spectrum (but "spectrum" is too linear a metaphor for today's compositional activity) is Ned Rorem. His music, new and older, was played on two evenings at Alice Tully Hall late in November. I heard only the second. Rorem uses voices and instruments in traditional ways and ranges; he is a tonal composer even when the key center is obscure and floating. The miniature movements of *Night Music* (1972) for violin and piano lacked rhythmic interest and, in the critical vernacular, did not "sound"—that is, did not make an immediate and distinctive impression on the musical mind, as Crumb's sonic images almost always do. Rorem's settings of poems from Sylvia Plath's *Ariel* (1971) fell short of heightening the naked neuroticism of the texts, and Phyllis Curtin's clear projection of the dense poetic diction provided the chief interest. *Bertha* (1968), an "opera in ten scenes" for children, was musically tame, and despite Rorem's apparently straightforward intentions the audience took it as "camp." The musical high point of the program was the Trio for flute, cello, and piano, written in 1959: an attractive, fluent, and witty neo-classical work. All of the performances were commendable.

In the drought of orchestral music produced by the ten-week strike of the New York Philharmonic's musicians, the October visit of the Leningrad Philharmonic was doubly welcome. I heard Shostakovich's Fifteenth Symphony and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony; at other concerts the orchestra, led by Gennady Rozhdestvensky, played music of Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky, and Rachmaninoff. I lack space to consider the puzzle of Shostakovich's new symphonic work, and in any case much has been written about it since the Philadelphia Orchestra introduced it to American audiences in 1972. But the Leningrad offered some of the most impressive orchestral playing I have heard in many seasons of concert-going: its polish, unanimity, and dynamic control were extraordinary. So thoroughly had the works been prepared that only token guidance was needed from Rozhdestvensky on the podium. The playing of the first-desk men was consistently beautiful, balances between orchestral choirs were exemplary, and rich tone was produced without obscuring articulation of phrase or detail. My views were shared by the New York musical community at large, so I abandon my customary reluctance to use the cheapened word and say with gratitude that the Leningrad Philharmonic is a great orchestra.

Other welcome fall visitors were the unclassifiable Cleo Laine, the West Indian-British singer who moves with ease from popular standards to settings of Shakespeare, and her husband John Dankworth, a clarinetist, saxophonist, and composer. Their Carnegie Hall concert in October encompassed a variety of musical styles but struck the most responsive chord in the audience when it settled into the jazz idiom of the early Fifties. Miss Laine and Mr. Dankworth are master musicians.

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MARCIA B. SIEGEL

The New Romantics

AS THE HIGHLIGHT OF ITS FALL SEASON the Joffrey Ballet gave Frederick Ashton's *The Dream* a lovely production, its first by an American company. The 1964 work, based on "A Midsummer Night's Dream," merely tells Shakespeare's story of the wise and foolish fairies and the moonstruck mortals. Two years earlier George Balanchine had expanded the story and turned it to the service of ballet by adding a second act wedding scene in the tradition of the grand old nineteenth-century ballets. The Balanchine *Dream* offers the dancers and audience a divertissement with a classical pas de deux, which would have been difficult to fit into the story illusion of the first act. Ashton doesn't allow himself any surrogate dance personages, so all his characters have to dance *and* tell the story. As a consequence, I think he's made one of the most expressive story ballets in the repertory.

For the Joffrey David Walker designed the romantic forest set and the costumes—gauzy confections for Titania and Oberon's court, and Victorian finery for the mortals—and Tom Skelton has ingeniously lit the stage so that the mortals move always in a warm glow and the fairies in a spray of silver. When the fairies first run across the stage, pausing in Sylphide-like attitudes to listen, and then skittering off again, you realize how foreign all this is to the Joffrey Ballet. The long Taglioni skirts are unusual; the Joffrey girls ordinarily wear no skirts over their tights or filmy little nothings that show off the whole length of the leg. But this is also the company's first attempt in a long time to deal with the whole old-ballet convention, the classical gestures, the use of the corps de ballet to create choral backgrounds and bridges for the main action, and the classical idea of dance as movement that can represent feelings, relationships, even happenings without literally doing them or imitating them.

Ashton's ballet is not without literal mime or naturalistic acting. Larry Grenier as Bottom, awakening from his enchantment and scratching his head in befuddlement and shock at the idea that he may have turned into an ass and been loved by the queen of the fairies, gave one of the finest character scenes I've ever seen. But the ballet's distinction lies more in the non-literal storytelling that is found in the dancing alone.

The piece begins on the run and keeps up its allegro pace right up to the final scene. But the fast pace of the fairies is smooth, airborne, in contrast to the mortals' agitated chases and graspings, their huge efforts to entrap or escape from one another. Ashton's choreography shows us two sets of characters, one unruffled, above the fray, the other confused, taking everything too seriously, accident-prone.

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The final pas de deux is more than just a love duet between the reconciled Titania and Oberon. Ashton has been showing us an Oberon of great stillness and command, also of anger and compassion; and a Titania who's so high-spirited she's almost flighty, who's temperamental but warmhearted. In this beautiful pas de deux, the choreographer slows down the tempo to a lullaby, until at the end the lovers retire together after the night's mischief. Oberon steadies and calms the excitable Titania. As he supports and finally cradles her, her movement gradually becomes smaller and less animated, she gives up her impulse to fly and yields to his unhurried persuasions. This is a pas de deux that shows us the character of the two dancers as much as it shows us that they can dance.

I think Ashton's best work is grounded in the dance image, just as in a different way Balanchine's is. He's not primarily making a dramatic point with *The Dream;* he's saying this is one kind of thing you can do with dancing. If you can't see Ashton this way, if the dancers don't show him to you this way, his ballets can be trivial, dull, academic or vaguely disappointing. *Façade* (1931), for instance, which returned to the Joffrey repertory after a lapse of a few seasons, is a pastiche of popular and theater dance styles, but the Joffrey plays it as if the dancing were just a pretext for jokes. The Royal Ballet gives this work quite reservedly, so you see that there's more to it than comedy.

The Dream is just beyond the Joffrey dancers' capacities. They do fairly well with the acting work, but when it comes to Ashton's steps—his complicated enchainements, exacting turns and balances, fluid changes of speed and direction, a precise though sometimes distorted line—they are in trouble, and the acting disappears altogether. They lose all character and become dancers working at steps.

Francesca Corkle, the company's strongest dancer technically, was given a single matinée to try Titania, and she wasn't able to bring much assurance to the acting demands of the role. The other Titania was Rebecca Wright, the company's resident soubrette and ingenue, paired with Burton Taylor. Both Taylor and Glenn White, who partnered Corkle, are handsome, and Taylor has a noble line that makes him look like a king. But Taylor, White and Wright couldn't meet the choreographic rigors of their roles. Russell Sultzbach was cast as Puck because he is red-haired and puckish, I suppose, and because the audience loves him, but his concept of both the role and the dancing seemed to come from Road Runner out of Loony Tunes.

The sentimentalizing of *The Dream* is symptomatic of the Joffrey Ballet's whole outlook and emphasis. This company has always made a point of its appeal to contemporary taste. It developed an enthusiastic young audience in the late-60s-early-70s with a series of genre pieces based on various popular fancies: the psychology of dreams, fear of the Bomb, mixed-media, occultism, love-peace-'n'-rock. It still

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announces with some pride that critics think Gerald Arpino's *Trinity* is "the best rock ballet ever created," as if there were a distinction in that. Having exhausted the fairly shallow possibilities of these ideas, the company began dipping into the ballet repertory of the past; that is, the twentieth century, which is about as much of a past as ballet can muster. It has acquired the Ashton, several Massine works, Limón, Jooss, a *Petrouchka,* names worthy of preservation, which in dance means live performance.

Concurrently with its youth pitch, then, the Joffrey presents itself as a museum, a company with a sense of history. I have trouble reconciling these two aesthetic points of view even if the audience doesn't. But there does seem to be a logic in it, the logic of Foreverland. Escapism, superficiality, showiness have always been components of ballet, and these elements seem to submerge or drift up to the surface in direct proportion to the strength of the choreographic talent around. In the Joffrey Ballet's case, the attitudes of escapism have become so pervasive that they throw a sickly cast over even good choreography.

The audience's tepid reaction to George Balanchine's *Square Dance* put the whole fall season into perspective. *Square Dance,* the only Balanchine work in the Joffrey's active repertory, usually gets a couple of insufficiently rehearsed performances a season. It is the most classical ballet the company now carries, the most concentrated on dance values. It gives the dancers, and especially the ballerina, Francesca Corkle, their best chance to show off the classical vocabulary. Yet the audience appears to think it's a bad ballet about a square dance.

The Joffrey is topic-oriented. Everybody comes to see the dancing, of course, to experience the vicarious thrill of motion and mastery, to look at the marvelous bodies, the theatricality. The fact that it's dance is taken for granted as something wonderful, a zippier, more exciting way to see a story told. But it seems so undifferentiated—the *kind* of dance, the quality, the appropriateness of it doesn't seem to matter.

So they gave us this fall yet another revival of José Limón's *The Moor's Pavane,* performed for its top layer only. Limón's original role, the Othello, has now come to be the property of a black man if the company doing the dance has one. Christian Holder is black, physically big, and charismatic, but he made hash out of Limón's choreography. The other dancers achieved the shape and intensity of the choreography with somewhat more success, but they never got it to look like a modern dance.

The pop audience accepts size in place of power, dramatic conflict for choreographic style or definition. *The Moor's Pavane* is first-rate storytelling, but it must have weight, amplitude in space, incisively controlled and balanced tensions among the four characters, in order to be Limón. With each successive Limón revival, I see these essential dynamics slipping away, and I get very pessimistic about modern

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dance repertory. If Limón, Humphrey, Graham and the others created ultimately to provide fodder for entertaining ballet, the modern dance hasn't amounted to anything.

Limón was a romantic, and his dances retain a certain verisimilitude even in stylistically weak versions because his basic vision was so grand. He conceived his characters and developed his movement heroically. I can see why they work as ballets. The new romantics want the feeling of a period, a place, an idea, a human incident; they want to be able to recognize the theme right away, feel at home with it, amble along with it pleasantly.

Or, as in the case of Robert Joffrey's own new ballet, *Remembrances,* wallow in it. *Remembrances* is based on Wagner's Wesendonck Lieder and other music associated with a lost love of the composer's youth, Mathilde Wesendonck. Not one but three protagonists are introduced: Donna Roll, "She, who sings"; Jan Hanniford, "She, who remembers"; and Francesca Corkle, who dances and has no name. All this Martha Grahaming suggests the women are aspects of the same character, but Roll sings and acts out the words most expressively, Corkle dances beautifully without any particular indication of character, and Hanniford glides back and forth between them to no apparent purpose.

I guess *Remembrances* is supposed to be an evocation of unfulfilled love. It goes on for a very long time. Corkle dances with various partners, mainly Jonathan Watts; other couples go in and out; nothing develops and nothing changes. The ballet is dark and luxurious, a mood, an atmosphere. Maybe it's meant as a soothing accompaniment for the audience's reveries.

There is so much surface attractiveness to the Joffrey repertory that it's easy to see Twyla Tharp's ballets as just more pop. Clive Barnes, defending some sort of faith or other, savagely attacked Tharp and those who prize her as being either disrespectful or ignorant of true classicism. The most charitable way I can interpret Barnes's insensitivity to Tharp is that he has some preconceived, unyielding idea of what is allowed in the name of "classic ballet." Of course, the Joffrey is not a "classic" company by any means, and if we followed Barnes to a logical end we would have to exclude Balanchine, Robbins and Barnes's one-time favorite, Gerald Arpino, all of whom have played with music and movement the same way he accuses Tharp of doing. I wonder what work Barnes would consider a true-blue "classic ballet" today, or if there are any. In any case, Barnes has been the chief advocate of pop dance in this country, so it's difficult to understand why he can't accept Tharp as enthusiastically as he did Arpino and many other pop choreographers.

It seems to me Tharp is both a pop artist *and* a classicist, if we must give her labels. But she is first of all an original; she makes her own terms, and her hand is so sure that those terms are compelling even when we don't know precisely what they are. *Deuce Coupe,* her won-

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derful pop ballet of last spring, is what pop should be but never is. We think of pop art as being exploitative, made to order, saleable, determinedly not serious. But here came Tharp, using all the pop paraphernalia—Beach Boys music, boogaloo and frug, live graffiti painters painting a backdrop, lickety-split jokes, more danced references to kid life in America than a barrel of *Trinitys*—and with this vocabulary appended to her own movement and classical ballet steps she said things that were serious, moving, sad; things maybe even profound about kids and about dancing and I guess about us too.

Pop ballets are usually created by fortyish guys working hard, out of nostalgia and a little envy, to identify with Youth; by people who are yearning to be in touch with their time only they can't find out what that is so they create what they would like it to be. I'll bet Twyla Tharp hasn't spent five minutes in the past year wondering where it's at or what to use for a theme so her next ballet will be contemporary. You can feel an energy of creation in her dances, an energy that is so concentrated it seems to have bored right into the earth and the vitals of the dancers, an energy that comes out, inevitably, alive and of this moment.

As Time Goes By, her new work, hasn't even got the trappings of pop—and maybe that's what got Barnes so steamed up. Its music is Haydn, the last two movements of the Farewell Symphony, and its theme is dancing. So is classicism's theme dancing. Heresy rears its ugly head. Tharp uses the classical movement vocabulary with distortions, changes, interpolations. She plays around with our ideas of how a classical work should look. She mixes up the order of energies, starting fast and ending slow. She makes the stage space all bunched up and busy sometimes instead of clear and symmetrical. She feints around the edges of things that are supposed to be hammering you into your seat, and she evades climaxes that have been working out the same way for generations.

I don't think Americans understand classicism very well. They think it means anything old. Or anything *representing* anything old. They think it's anything that satisfies their longing for the safe, the secure, the already understood and explained. The Joffrey Ballet repertory is loaded with old fashioned ballets—Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo ballets and movie-romance ballets and World War II jazzy America ballets and Arpino ballets in their various period guises, including Berkeley in the age of the flower children. Twyla Tharp is important to the Joffrey audience, not because she represents a now generation or adds a new item to the catalogue of styles. She's not even important because I and a lot of other critics say she is. Tharp is important because while everyone around her is enjoying a period of choreographic decline and even decadence, she is reversing the process. Or, as I overheard Valerie Bettis say one night after a performance of *As Time Goes By,* "It's nice to see someone who's busy about dance."

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Reviews

GUY DAVENPORT

The Indian and His Image

"He is smart," the eighty-year-old Crow Plenty Coup said of the white man, "but not wise." At Little Big Horn the medicine men stole the wits of Custer's cavalrymen, Wooden Legs remembered, so that they went crazy and shot each other. The Cheyenne and Sioux, men trained to feign indifference to danger like the bear and to stare at their enemies like the wolf, had also assumed that the United States Army was usually dizzy with fire water. The *Columbia Encyclopedia* speaks of the "overwhelming numerical superiority of the Indians" without a word about their stone-age weapons.

Was the band still playing "The Girl I Left Behind Me" on fifes and drums when the indifferent, copper faces of the Cheyennes lifted their chins and tossed their shoulders and gave the coyote cries that froze a thousand Presbyterian bowels? By this time we can play Homer and expend richly Romantic sympathies for the hearts that beat beneath breastplates of eagle shins and those that beat beneath blue gabardine. We can cheer on the Sioux ponies plunging so rhythmically to the pounded shaman's drum and war cries, or we can be stirred by the frantic bugles trilling form and charge, by feathered spears or by the guidons dispersing three ways as captains standing in their stirrups tried to shape battle lines against a seamless and focussing horizon of Cheyenne and Sioux.

Custer, who had watched Lee hand his sword to Grant at Appomattox, must have known that his opponent on this occasion, a sachem of sachems who seemed to be a cross between a Roman senator and an owl with all its feathers blown backward, would merely grunt with disgust if he offered him his sword, and get on with the ticklish business of scalping so bald a man as George Armstrong Custer.

Sentimentality and cruelty are the ingredients of practically all our attitudes toward the redskin. He must be an official symbol in American lore, the presiding genius at Thanksgiving, the honorable and hieratic First American, the image for fifty years on our basic coin the penny (1859-1909)—outlasting his fellow victim the buffalo, which was on our nickel for twenty-five years (1913-1938)—and at the same time he must disappear one way or another, either through outright extermination, or by assimilation. The Indian has refused both these exits from existence.

Elémire Zolla, professor of American literature at the University

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of Genoa,[1] examines in this long and meticulously detailed study[2] the historical rivalry of contradictory and consistently inadequate ideas with which European man approached the American Indian.

The villain of Prof. Zolla's book is an idea: that of Progress. It was inherent in both the Puritan plan to convert and thus civilize the Indian and in the Enlightenment programs of various kinds which were not so much interested in saving the Indian's immortal soul as in introducing him to soap, decent clothes, education, and a steady job. Progress is a complex, self-deluding idea. It must suppose that the history of man is from some primitive condition to a civilized one, and civilization at the time of the New World's discovery was already transforming itself into a definition which uncritically included all technology while assuming that spiritual concerns were settled long before and would as if by a law of nature look after themselves.

The Puritans who thought they were bringing salvation to the Indian (the gift was more like gunpowder, rum, measles, and paranoia) were bringing instead the god Progress in whose superficial goodness and single-minded jealousy of its prerogatives was concealed the plan of genocide which in fact developed as the white man's only real attitude toward the Indian for three hundred years. There are pioneer Bibles in the library of the University of Texas bound in Indian skin. That symbol concentrates everying Prof. Zolla has to say. *A neat idea!* Something to go look at on our vacation, Bibles bound in Indian skin. Genocide may well be an American invention.

And yet the Renaissance mind had trained itself to think of Ovidian Golden Ages, when man lived in a simple, natural nobility. Here it all is: discovered—a living past. America was Arcadia, the Indian a natural philosopher. But *that* idea concealed genocide, too, for it was a literary idea which no one seriously intended to do anything about. What happens to Golden Ages is that they are supplanted by ages symbolized by baser, more practical metals. So for a third of his book Prof. Zolla must chart the impact of Renaissance ideas on the new world and show that there was little for the Indian to choose between the evangelists ("And why did you wait so long," said a Massachusetts Indian, "to come tell us?") and the capitalists.

The Indian's subtlest enemy was, and probably still is, humanitarianism bred of Enlightenment hope for reason in all things and universal *bon ton*. The Indian is a *child* of Nature; he is a creature of passion and instinct. He is primitive. To the Enlightenment mind he

[1] A man who has done pioneer research into matters American scholars have largely neglected (the sources and meaning of Melville's *Clarel*, for example). Novelist *(Minuetto all'inferno, Cecilia o della disattenzione)* and historian of ideas, he is best known for his *The Eclipse of the Intellectuals* (1959), a study of twentieth-century philosophy and art against the background of technology and the blinding idea of human progress.

[2] THE WRITER AND THE SHAMAN: A MORPHOLOGY OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN, *by Elémire Zolla*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $12.50. Trans. by Raymond Rosenthal.

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was in the precise sense of the word *retarded*. He was behindtime on the linear scale of history; his future (as college presidents say at Commencement) was all before him; given reason, he would move ahead to invent the electric chair, usury, landlords, polite conversation, and the machine gun.

Throughout the first three centuries of colonization the understanding of the Indian's mode of life was all but nil. The white man seemed determined to misunderstand. The Indian's chastity which ought to have been admired by a Christian was interpreted as frigidity. At the same time the Indian's nakedness was said to be salacious. The Indian's indifference to pain was not compared to Sparta and the Stoic creeds but to a perverse masochism. The Indian's intense religious observance was gratuitously identified as diabolism. He was to European eyes a shiftless creature. His womenfolk did all manual labor; he gambled, delighted in warfare, fell into trances, and imagined that he could converse with bears and raccoons.

Much misguided energy went into determining *who* he was, as Scripture was silent on his existence. (That the red men were lost tribes of Israel was a long-held theory, and giddy Puritans were always trying to address them in Hebrew.) Racism is a precise prejudice; you never know who a man might not be. And prejudice must always have a man one's inferior or superior, never one's equal. The Indian is still caught in the schizoid view that he is superior (a *noble* savage) and that he is utterly inferior (evolutionary drop-out).

By the nineteenth century the white man began in the name of science to *listen* to the Indian, to find out what he thought, how he understood the world.

Though the man usually credited with beginning research into Indian ethnology is Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (from whose writings Longfellow would glean *Hiawatha*), Prof. Zolla places him among the obstructionists. He ended by convicting the Indian one more time of the unforgivable sin of refusing Progress, and thus saw red men as an inferior race. Schoolcraft got it into his head (and was widely believed, especially by the United States Government) that the Indian is just that, a Hindu, a member of a "static" race which through fatigue and sloth has declined man's destiny of perpetual development. From Schoolcraft comes the idea of that benevolent concentration camp, the Indian Reservation.

Another early ethnologist, Lewis Henry Morgan, had even more far-reaching effects. His demonstration that the Indian was, in some slow way, evolving (he saw in the Iroquois the transition from tribe to primitive nation) fell into the hands of Engels and eventually into the hands of Lenin. Liberalism thereby acquired an ethnology, and Marxism even now looks forward to the greatest synthesis man can imagine: the noble savage simple, moral, kind, and pure of heart *in* the most advanced technological development.

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The real pioneer in Indian ethnology was Charles Godfrey Leland (1824-1903), a Philadelphian educated at Princeton and Heidelberg, a kind of American George Borrow who was indifferent to appearances and immune to the idea of Progress. He was initiated into the tribe of the Kaw, joined the Gypsies, and died in Florence studying Etruscan lore and witchcraft. It was Leland who first understood the shamanistic nature of Indian religions, the sources of spiritual power, the sharp *difference* of the Indian mind and soul.

From mid-nineteenth-century anthropology forward the search into the reality of Indian life has gone forward (this account occupies the second half of Prof. Zolla's study). The outline of the Indian's progress from Puritan writings to Cooper to Black Elk is fairly well known to reasonably literate people; it is the forgotten heroes of the process who are most interesting, essayists like Mary Austin (1868-1934) whose *The American Rhythm* Prof. Zolla restores to its rightful place in American literature, as well as her novel *The Land of Little Rain*. Ethnologists (Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict) and novelists (Willa Cather, William Faulkner) have had the lion's share of interpreting the Indian, and sometimes the two are combined, as in Jaime de Angulo. In cataloguing these latter-day portrayers of the Indian Prof. Zolla is commendably thorough and searching: this book deserves the adjective *authoritative*. It will assume the status of *the* survey of the American Indian in our literature, and many theses will be generated from its ideas, pro and contra.

Scholars will want to argue with some of the categorizing that Prof. Zolla's neat mind posits (is Bartram, for instance, to be placed among the insensitive? or Mark Twain?). Prof. Zolla has his off moments: he does not seem to understand that Thomas Berger's *Little Big Man* is an ironic novel. He does not know the work of Paul Metcalf (*Will West, Patagoni*). He does not talk nearly enough about the image of the Indian in the movies. His zoning out of his subject the Mexican and South American Indian may in many ways have distorted his subject (one thereby loses such signal statements as Charles Olson's "The Kingfishers" and Prescott's Incas and Aztecs).

On the other hand, it is refreshing to see that an Italian scholar is not taken in by the unresonating mind of Edmund Wilson, whose understanding of things spiritual (Indian or otherwise) tended to be extraordinarily flat.

Prof. Zolla ends his book with an informed glance at Indian literature itself, and may be right in suspecting that there exists in it a treasure very like the lore of the Dogon which Marcel Griaule and Germaine Dieterlen found. For the Indian is still a prisoner on his own continent and his religion and lore are still an unknown matter. Whether they are about to become a depressed people is a question aside from that of their treaties and their civil rights. Indians are still shot for sport in Brazil. Most Americans probably suppose that

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they are already extinct, or that the Department of Indian Affairs can still be counted on to render them extinct if they raise a serious ruckus (like burring up to the Atomic Energy Commission or objecting to a new highway for the American God the Automobile).

I spent my childhood collecting Indian arrows and tomahawks, and used to know practically every camping ground on the upper Savannah before the AEC flooded them all. I was aware that two Indians, Anne Breadcrust and Jack Frost, used to live on the edge of the old homestead, the social inferiors of even the black fieldhands. The first real Indian I met (aet. 10) sold me a Cherokee bow ("Made in Czechoslovakia" was stamped in purple ink near one bownotch). For all my awareness of the real Indian, he might as well be a mythological creature, an Etruscan to our Rome, one of the Old Gods now so shy and cautious that they are rarely seen.

But of course this is not so. The Indians are probably more numerous now than at the time of Columbus' discovery. They are a vigorous people. After four hundred years of stubborn refusal to accept the gift of Europe which we have by now corrupted out of all resemblance to anything like a civilization, they should be brought to the council tables with all the old treaties in their hands. The idea that time cannot be reversed is mere Enlightenment dogma, Liberal twaddle. And the sovereignty of the State is a totalitarian idea useful only to collect taxes. Let the Indian Nations exist again within our borders.

Prof. Zolla's study of the Indian in our literature is a book that means far more than it says. It is obviously a companion to his analysis of modern art and thought in a technological culture. The myth which was made to serve technology (the Renaissance myth of progress from primitive origins to a sophisticated and enlightened civilization) is coming to pieces before our eyes. It was perhaps an economic (and therefore immoral) myth to begin with; all its spirituality clotted into the idea of *convenience,* one of the strangest and tackiest ideas ever conceived by mankind. It may be the most corrupting social idea since that of slavery; and like slavery it is invisible while we are in its midst.

It is the prime duty of the moralist to point to examples of virtue; I have a feeling that this is what Prof. Zolla is doing in this long study of the encounter between a people and a culture which they have held in utter contempt for four centuries. The wise man (better to say simply the sane man) will look at this contempt, to see what gives it its integrity and substance. The Indian is but one example of a people free of the myth of maniacally reiterated examples of convenient gimmickry which we mistake for progress. Any book that can penetrate the opacity of the technological myth is worth attention; this one is also a distinguished contribution to the history of ideas.

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JOHN N. MORRIS

Making More Sense Than Omaha

A REVIEWER STRANGE TO HIS READERS may perhaps most properly introduce himself by at once suggesting the range, however limited, of his tastes. I shall begin, then, with a book I much admire and turn immediately after to one I deplore.

At first glance, *Hard Freight,* Charles Wright's new book,[1] may seem a journey in a time machine, a visit to the 'fifties. Here are those poems from Italy, with such titles as "Slides of Verona" and "Oscar Wilde at San Miniato"; here are "homages" to Pound and Rimbaud, and a stanza made out of fragments from Kafka's diaries (here, even, are the Notes that tell us so). Here, in the usual unlikely context, are phrases like "Dante explained it, how. . . ."

But of course first glances aren't to be trusted. Wright's book is indeed a time machine of sorts, but the destinations and the destinies to which, when it is working at its best, it transports us have nothing, or nothing much, to do with literary fashion. Often, perhaps usually, the journey is backward, and "The way back is always into the earth." Thus, in "Nightdream,"

> Up and up from his green grave, your father
> Wheels in the wind, split scrap of smoke;
> Under him stretch, in one file, Bob's Valley, Bald Knob,
> The infinite rectitude
> Of all that is past: Ouachita,
> Ocoee, the slow slide of the Arkansas.
>
> *
>
> (In Kingsport, beneath the trees,
> A Captain is singing Dixie; sons
> Dance in their golden suits, clapping their hands;
> And mothers and fathers, each
> In a soft hat, fill
> With dust-dolls, their long boxes).

And here, from what at first looks like one of those usual painter poems, "Portrait of the Poet in Abraham Von Werdt's Dream":

> Outside, the Venice skyline, and stars
> Half-seen through an opened window;
> Inside, it's the Renaissance,

[1] HARD FREIGHT, by *Charles Wright*. Wesleyan University Press. $6.00.

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The men in hose,
The furnishings elegant, but spare;

*

Two cherubs support the three
Disordered initials of my signature.

Paper is stacked in neat piles, as I
First drew them; square blocks of type, their beds
Tilted and raised, their letters reversed,
Glisten among the shadows;

*

Alone in an alcove, a sixth man, unnoticed
And unfamiliar, his strange clothes
Centuries out of date, is writing, his back turned
To what I tried to record.
The lines, a spidery darkness, move
Across the page. Now
He looks this way. And now he rises
—XYZ, his mouth says, XYZ—,
Thrusting the paper into my hands.
These words are the words he has written.

The title perhaps gives that particular game away a little. But no more than in certain poems of Mark Strand's and Donald Justice's that this somewhat resembles is simple surprise the point or end of the exercise.

It may be that no single poem here has quite the permanent and classic weight of "The Grave of the Right Hand," the title poem of Wright's earlier collection. But I couldn't have said of that book, as I can of this one, that I everywhere admire the exactness of these verses, composed, line by absolute line, of associations at once strange and just. "Nouns are precise, they wear/ The boots of authority," Wright says at one point, and usually one can only obey. As in these lines:

The clouds, great piles of oblivion, cruise
Over the world, the wind at their backs
Forever. They darken whomever they please.

I had read a few of the poems in *Cruelty* (as aptly titled a book as I've come across in some time) in an issue of the *American Poetry Review,* and I most powerfully detested them—as no doubt it was intended that middle-aged, middle-class, male professors like me should.[2] Having now gone through the whole book, I see no reason

[2] CRUELTY, by *Ai.* Houghton Mifflin. $4.95.

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to change my mind. Consider the titles of a few of these brief assaults upon us (and, whatever the intention, upon their subjects as well): "Abortion," "Tired Old Whore," "Forty-Three-Year-Old Woman, Masturbating," "The Cripple," "The Suicide," "Child Beater." If it is your pleasure to be appalled, here is God's plenty. For instance, from "Abortion":

> You've done it, as you warned me you would
> and left the fetus wrapped in wax paper
> for me to look at. My son.

Or this, from "Child Beater":

> I lay the belt on a chair
> And get her dinner bowl.
> I hit the spoon against it, set it down
> And watch her crawl to it,
> pausing after each forward thrust of her legs
> and when she takes her first bite,
> I grab the belt and beat her across the back
> until her tears, beads of salt-filled glass, falling,
> shatter on the floor.
>
> I move off. I let her eat,
> while I get my dog's chain leash from the closet.
> I whirl it around my head.
> O daughter, so far, you've only had a taste of icing,
> are you ready now for some cake?

I am a little hard put to explain to anyone who doesn't feel it already the illegitimacy of this. To be very solemn, the difficulty has to do with the problem addressed but not resolved by Aristotle, the question of the moral standing of the pleasure we take in the pain in which art often and properly deals. But of course, if I am not much mistaken, art, in any of the usual acceptances of the term, is not very high on the list of this author's intentions. If I inquire why then these utterances arrogate to themselves the honorable name of poetry, the modest answer may be (in such cases it usually is) that they mean to modify or transform our sense of what poetry is. At this point the argument is, as far as I am concerned, at an end. It seems to me that the claims or justifications one might advance for *Cruelty* resemble those one might advance for pornography; and that *Cruelty* is in fact a species of pornography, the pornography of pain. That these pieces exhibit a certain skill, a certain horrible energy, is undeniable; the question is whether that skill and energy are here licitly employed.

I turn now, if only for the sake of contrast, to *Good Morning*, a

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collection of the final poems of Mark Van Doren.[3] The volume comes to us with a foreword by Richard Howard—a foreword I mean to draw on heavily here. Howard's remarks, as he says, are really an appreciation of the Van Doren lyric canon at large, not "an introduction to this last book of lyrics." I think it unlikely—and so, I suspect, does Howard—that these poems, fine though many of them are, will by themselves procure many conversions to a taste for the kind of lyricism Van Doren practiced. Neither these nor the poems they follow are in any of the usual modern modes. This is a poetry that "prefers to be interesting . . . rather than to be excruciating . . . ," says Mr. Howard, making a distinction that conveniently expresses one difference between *Cruelty* and Van Doren's book; it is a poetry that "prefers centers to edges, meetings to sunderings. . . ." Meetings indeed. Consider the title, the grave and dignified civility of its greeting—or, as in an older idiom, its dismissal. For this volume is, as Howard says, a poetry of The Departure. "How praise a world that will not be/ Forever?" is the clear, ambiguous question. And as a kind of reply, another poem:

> Never again shall I,
> Never again shall we—
> Look—that cloud—how huge,
> How high can beauty be?
>
> *
>
> Dusk at the edges, though,
> Then softness so deep within,
> Beauty itself is sleeping
> Till Doomsday shall have been.

Mr. Howard mildly observes that for most contemporary readers poetry of this sort is "problematic," which is to say "unfashionable." Its "decorum," he continues, "admits of sharp observation, but not much experiment or originality with the tools of that observation, either words or senses." Disciplined by its negatives, this recommendation merits attention: it points us accurately toward the collected poems, those "more than six hundred pages of . . . that middle, that central life which is so ruthlessly excluded from the 'modern' lyric."

Here is a rather different book by another Columbia professor. "Perhaps we can imagine a book like this one . . ." runs the epigraph to the title poem of David Shapiro's fourth volume, *The Page-Turner*.[4] Perhaps we can, for here it is. The epigraph comes from a work called *The Nature of the Universe,* a title which I think identifies the ambi-

[3] GOOD MORNING, by *Mark Van Doren*. Foreword by Richard Howard. Hill and Wang. $6.95.

[4] THE PAGE-TURNER, by *David Shapiro*. Liveright. $4.95.

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tion, however playfully expressed, of "The Page-Turner" and *The Page-Turner*. But enough about titles.

> The cover of the book is itself exactly
> Page one is you within a small room
> Page three already a fair field for your tomb
> Page four contains Newark matter-of-factly
>
> Page five appropriates all its frightening streets
> On page six Greater Manhattan glumly fits
> There is room on page seven for all deceits
> And on page eight the earth confortably sits
>
> *
>
> On page twenty-seven we approach the limit
> And we are neither unique nor rare
> And no matter how far we go into it
> At the end of our amazement is distant air
>
> Now we really seem to be near the end
> Covering one more page at enormous speeds
> And what can we expect, from our imaginary hand
> On page twenty-eight, when all we see recedes?

The world as a book and the book as a world—and a world that is full of a number of things: the word red painted in green, for example, and the infant Richard Wagner, a suppositious glass polisher dying of cancer, quotations from Emily Dickinson and *Hudibras,* and "a bird of good family." I am reminded, not just coincidentally, of that longest parenthesis in literature, Kenneth Koch's *Ko,* the first word of which ("Meanwhile") attaches, in the manner of a conjunctive adverb, the remarkably on-going goings-on of the poem to the main clause in which we live. It is all very interesting, and now and then, especially toward the beginning of Shapiro's book, it is even intelligible.

But how about this?

> One arrives in England, and the train station is a dirty toad.
> Father takes a plane on credit card with medical telephone.
> One calls up America at three-thirty, one's fiancée
> is morally alone.
> But the patient is forever strapped to the seat in mild turbu-
> lence.
>
> Thinking of America along psychoanalytic lines, and then
> delicately engraving nipples
> On each of two round skulls

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You have learned nothing from music but Debussy's ions
And the cover of the book is a forest with two lovers with
empty cerebella.

This poem is accurately entitled "A Problem" and it reminds me of a truth printed on the dust-jacket of *The Page-Turner:* "interpretation . . . is a marginal (frequently impossible) matter. . . ." For accuracy that is hard to beat. But let me try. "The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; [his] learning instructs, and [his] subtilty surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased." I hope it is clear that in adducing this famous passage of dispraise I mean Mr. Shapiro a compliment of sorts.

"I ask,/ should a poem make more sense than Omaha?" inquires David Young, a question appropriate at this juncture.[5] I'm not perfectly sure what Young's answer would be, but on the evidence of *Boxcars* (I haven't read his first collection) I'd guess that he'd say that a poem should, but that making sense can be a pretty cheerful business.

Vincent had written a tiny modern classic.
He was showing it to Luigi, his childhood
Chum and long-standing
Squash partner. "Don't
Drop it, Luigi," he cautioned,
"It's tiny and fragile and there are no copies
Yet!"
"Vincent"—Luigi spoke carefully—
"You've written a tiny
Modern classic here!" Vincent looked half
Convinced; he examined the handle
Of his squash racket modestly.

Or this, from "The Death of the Novel":

1.
As she shook her little fist
her filmy gown
swung open.
"Sacre bleu!" he gasped.
"Shall we seal this pact
as only a man and woman can?"

Outside the jungle chattered in the dawn.

[5] BOXCARS, by *David Young*. The Ecco Press. $6.95.

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3.
Because he took her everywhere
in his old droshky, they made a stir
in all the villages that summer
while she grew to like, then to adore
his very pawkiness, his air
of staggering kindness. . . .

*

5.
Bertram rattled the door, a wild
glare on his face, teeth clenched:
"What have you done with my manuscript?"
The undertaker smiled.

If this should seem too jokey, there are other tones. Here is the beginning of "Peelee Island, Lake Erie":

It's a fine line
between what was abandoned
and what was never settled

but this island
where the wheat looks out of place
a dying man sells corn
and scarecrows sound like shotguns

is the right place to knock
foreheads with nature
and grow accustomed
to the idea of perishing. . . .

There's nothing wrong with the rest of it either. And I wish I had space to quote his longish "Thoughts of Chairman Mao," a piece I hesitate to call political because it is at once intelligent and a poem. Now in his thirties, David Young seems to be a man who has managed to grow up without going all glum about it, a poet in whom innocence and experience are happily and seriously married. I shall be surprised if the poems don't go on getting better and yet better.

Kenneth Hanson's *The Uncorrected World* is fifty-nine lucid pages of very quiet verse about being or not being in Greece, a book in which the author presents himself to us as a sort of tourist-in-residence.[6] In his short, deliberately unpoetical lines we ride "out the good road/ built by NATO" to discover, quite by chance, the birthplace of Hesiod; or, again pretty much by accident, we drink "from a spring/ guaranteed to make you/ immortal."

[6] THE UNCORRECTED WORLD, by *Kenneth O. Hanson*. Wesleyan University Press. $6.00.

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The water was cold and
tasted of stones. It was
not sweet, it was somehow
more real than that
and reminded me both
of the mountain and of the valley.

We accompany him to a bar in Athens, where we learn that the Colonels disapprove of "the breaking of plates for fun." We observe the sailors of the Sixth Fleet, how "They sparkle in their innocence/ and whites." We go to a wedding or perhaps we visit a beach, where

swimmers in shallow water
cried Thalassa! Thalassa!
not to each other
but to the sea, as if
it needed reminding.

Thus described, Hanson's book may not sound very remarkable. And it's true that Hanson's poems, though easy to quote (being everywhere much the same in tone), are hard to quote from in a way that suggests the final character of the book, which is superior to the particular merits of the notations and anecdotes that are its parts. I think the whole enterprise comes into focus in the last four or five poems, where it becomes clear that the book is a meditation on the deep uses of travel, on the "distances we gaze into" of his last line. Hanson's Greece, however full it is of the facts that he records, is in part an idea in his mind, his version or vision of The Other Place, that real fiction necessary to some of us if we are to have our home. The Other Place is the object of a quest: "It takes much looking/ after which you must be lucky."

The olive trees
and the orange trees and the cypress
will change your life, the rocks
and the lies and the gods
and the strict music. If you go there
you should be prepared to leave
at a moment's notice, knowing
after all you have been somewhere.

The great virtues of *Up Country*, Maxine Kumin's latest volume,[7] are widely known, and therefore it can do little harm if I carp a bit. I would wish away the decorations that the illustrator Barbara Swan

[7] UP COUNTRY: Poems of New England, by *Maxine Kumin*. Drawings by Barbara Swan. Harper & Row. $2.95.

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provides. This poet's eye is in the first place a good deal sharper than this artist's. And not only are the illustrations unnecessary, they are positively a hindrance: prettifications, they draw too much attention to the slightly ladylike quality of a few of these poems, the air they have of essays in the female georgic.

That such an impression is not final is owing to the presence here of such poems as "Turning To." "Death/ is what I always think of/ in these connections," she begins, the connections having everything to do with love. Or consider that sardonically sacramental poem "The Vealers":

> They come forth with all four legs folded in
> like a dime-store card table.
> Their hides are watered silk.
> As in blindman's bluff they rise, unable
> to know except by touch, and begin
> to root from side to side in search of milk.

For ten weeks "each is penned/ narrowly and well, like a Strasbourg goose." They go early to market,

> and in our time they will come forth for good
> dead center
> wrapped and labeled in a plastic sheet,
> their perfect flesh unstreaked with blood
> or muscle, and we will eat.

A book as handsomely presented as Michael Van Walleghen's *Wichita Poems,* from The Stone Wall Press in Iowa City, could endow the deadest verses with some semblance of life.[8] But most of these poems don't need that kind of help any more than Maxine Kumin's do, though of course they must be grateful to get it. Van Walleghen's poems are about as imperially quiet as poems can be: they command attention rather than demanding it. In short, adjusted lines—lines that, however brief, are capable of eloquent openings-out—they proceed to their exact destinations. Here is "The Light":

> On a cloudy day
> on a day the clouds
> the lake the late
> small sun seem stopped
> and the gray birds
> dive like stones
> or drift high
> petrified and small

[8] THE WICHITA POEMS, by *Michael Van Walleghen*. Prints by William Kough. The Stone Wall Press. $7.50.

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against the light
against that symbol, metaphor
and old analogy
to which the heart
perpetually aspires,
on such a day,
even Icarus
might have turned
and walked into the marsh,
noticed by tall birds stalking
and the glittering fishes
that, cloud-like,
move away.

And certain of these poems tell us no more than we can stand to know about that poetically dangerous subject, a surreptitious and finally failing love affair:

or sometimes, rarely,
blessed by accident perhaps
with one full day
we'd drive out nervously
for picnics
to some landscape
from a book on Kansas
near a river
fifty million years ago.

Van Walleghen has written the only poem I know—"Where She Lives"—in which the presence of Mr. Nixon is not an embarrassment. I wish this book had been printed in an edition of more than 250 copies and at a price lower than $7.50.

I perceive that what I am liking best among the books that have chanced to come to me for review are poems and books of poems that are full of stillnesses of one sort or another. In *Departures,* for only the third time in this quietest of poetic careers, Donald Justice just barely breaks the silence, uttering his delicate strong menaces into our welcoming ears.[9] "There has been traffic enough/ In the boudoir of the muse," he says in a poem for (sort of) his writing students:

And still they come, demanding entrance,
Noisy, and with ecstatic cries
Catching the perfume, forcing their way—
For them, what music? Only,
Distantly, through some door ajar,

[9] DEPARTURES, by *Donald Justice*. Athenæum. $2.95.

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Echoes, broken strains; and the garland
Crushed at the threshold.

As for their elders and abetters,

We few with the old instruments,
Obstinate, sounding the one string—
For us, what? Only, at times,
The sunlight of late afternoon
That plays in the corner of a room,
Playing upon worn keys. At times,
Smells of decaying greenery, faint bouquets—
More than enough. And our cries
Diminish behind us. . . .

The grave sounds of this echoing song conclude:

Closed are the grand boulevards,
And closed those mouths that made the lesser songs,
And the curtains drawn in the boudoir.

On Justice's own showing, of course, not quite.

Those who, standing on some mysterious principle, object to a poetry that is sometimes about poetry, poems that are about themselves, will find here much to enjoy deploring. This is a risk Justice seems to face willingly, as in the poem I've just quoted from, or in, say, "Homage to the Memory of Wallace Stevens":

The dictionary
Closed at dusk, along with the zoo in the park.
And the wings of the swans are folded now like the
sheets of a long letter.
Who borrows your French words and postures now?

And consider the following perfect circle, absolute in its exclusiveness:

This poem is not addressed to you.
You may come into it briefly,
But no one will find you here, no one.
You will have changed before the poem will.

*

You neither can nor should understand what it means.
Listen, it comes without guitar,
Neither in rags nor any purple fashion.
And there is nothing in it to comfort you.

Close your eyes, yawn. It will be over soon.

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You will forget the poem, but not before
It has forgotten you. And it does not matter.
It has been beautiful in its erasures.

O bleached mirrors! Oceans of the drowned!
Nor does it matter what you think.
These are not my words now.
This poem is not addressed to you.

An unfriendly critic might turn against him one of Justice's own lines from one of the stanzas I've omitted—"It has the spurious glamor of certain voids." But I'm not inclined to do so.

And anyway, Justice has other subjects. As his title suggests, this is a poetry of "Everything going away in the night again and again" (the last line in the book), a poetry of "an elegy . . . preparing itself:

There are pines that are tall enough
Already. In the distance,
The whining of saws; and needles,
Silently slipping through the chosen cloth.
The stone, then as now, unfelt,
Perfectly weightless. And certain words,
That will come together to mourn,
Waiting, in their dark clothes, apart.

Friends whose opinions about these matters I usually defer to tell me that I am wrong to value as highly as I do Mark Strand's new book, *The Story of Our Lives.*[10] And it has to be admitted that of course there is a case to be made against Strand's work—a case that Strand himself has made.

We are reading the story of our lives
as though we were in it,
as though we had written it.
This comes up again and again.

One can only say in response that indeed it *does* come up again and again, in poem after poem from his first book on, to the point of obsession. And we could join Strand in the wish that he expresses thus: "We keep turning the pages,/ hoping for something,/ something like mercy or change. . . ." This obsession and this hope have produced at times some pretty unremarkable work. The "litanies" in *Darker,* for instance, are so many uninspired raids on Christopher Smart. Even in the present volume, the long first poem, "Elegy for My Father," does not, for me, display the strength that I find elsewhere in Strand's work and that, especially because of its occasion, I

[10] THE STORY OF OUR LIVES, by *Mark Strand.* Atheneum. $2.95.

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should like to discover here. The fact seems to be that only with the greatest difficulty can Strand realize the existence of other people. (Their *otherness* he manages to convey well enough; it's the *existence* part that gives him trouble.) Indeed, it's hard enough for him to bring *himself* into imaginative being. The attempt to do just this appears in fact to be the motive or subject or both of his most characteristic poems, in which he is as other to himself as others are.

Hence, perhaps, a particular kind of poem that appears often in the earlier books—poems I've taken to calling "You poems," in which *you* is neither a definite someone else nor the vague *you,* a substitute for *one,* in which you include yourself. Rather, it is a kind of half-split-off instance of *I* (or *I* and *he*) to whom the poet can speak in a tone at once remote, intimate and minatory, or upon whom he can report as *you* goes about his (its?) unsettling, affectless business.

It is by this and other, related means (there's only one real You poem in the new book, and it's a minor one) that Strand achieves his characteristic effects. The point is that though a number of such poems may be mere exercises in a manner, a number of them aren't. Quite often enough the manner—the manners—work. Among the successes is what is certainly the longest—320 lines or so—and what seems to me the queerest and finest of the poems in Strand's new book, "The Untelling." So very wonderfully odd is it and so much does it exist in its effects upon the reader that I shall have very little to say about it directly. At once more obviously and more mysteriously than most poems, it has a plot, it tells a story. Or rather, as the title asserts, it untells one, it undoes itself. Over and over the poem has to do with a man writing and remembering, a man who is (and was) *"where I was, where I would be, and where I am"*; it has to do with a man who was and always will be *"running over the lawn, waving a sheet/of paper and shouting"*; and it has to do with a woman in a yellow dress.

My formula "has to do with" deliberately suggests the distance I wish to keep between these remarks and the poem itself. I know it makes me sound as if I were describing a detective story, whose outcome I must not give away. But this is a mystery, not a detective story. And the ending of the poem, its undoing, unravelling, is not really a surprise so much as it is a confirmation, a perfection; the pleasure it provides is repeatable and lasting. Still, I should like the poem's vertiginous clarities to be encountered firsthand first. And so much of a whole is it that quotation in bits and pieces cannot give an adequate sense of even the local manifestations of the profound and eerie virtues of this palimpsest, this essay in the paleography of the imagination. With (or even without) the other two long poems in the concluding section of this book, "The Untelling" is the culmination of one (the only?) line of Strand's development. However modish his enterprise may now and then have seemed and however obvious may be its antecedents and its sometimes unfortunate effects upon the work of others, it seems to me to have produced one of the very few nearly permanent American poems of recent years.

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BRUCE ALLEN

Fiction Chronicle[1]

ONLY A READER WITH THE SOUL of a reviewer would say that Howard Moss's lucidly rich "Introduction" to *The Poet's Story* is the best thing in the book. The collection is valuable for its announced—and most immediate—purpose: to preserve fiction by poets who have not elsewhere collected their stories. It contains excellent pieces from such uncelebrated fictioneers as Louise Bogan, John Hollander, W. S. Merwin, Jon Swan; and at least two better known stories: Richard Wilbur's much-anthologized "A Game of Catch," the vivid portrait of a boy seeking advantage over rivals through a nervy, vengeful exercise of imagination; and Sylvia Plath's uncomfortably funny "Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams," a jaggedly cut-off slice of (inner) life that seems to have become an instant (if somewhat modish) classic.

The value of Moss's Introduction is its witty attention to that bothersome constant in fiction, the relationship between the Self and the World. He distinguishes two kinds of fiction writers—on the basis of two contrasting ways of viewing "reality." "Window" writers look through arranged frames at the world outside themselves, and assume as their primary task the faithful rendering of the objective world. "Mirror" writers accept themselves as dependable microcosms, and turn examination inward, looking for universality in both specific experience and unique angle of vision. Emily Dickinson, says Moss, was a "mirror" writer; Walt Whitman, a "window" writer.

For the purposes of his anthology, the distinction is, in effect, defensive. Reasoning that ". . . the self—the I—is most typically the viewpoint from which a poem is conceived and written," Moss presumes an unavoidable insularity in poets' stories:

> . . . through they have learned to search for the truth, because that search has been directed toward themselves, their interest tends to be parochial or narcissistic or limited to the landscape and the psychology of the ego.

He plainly (and very *precisely*) confesses that: "Good writers hover,

[1] THE POET'S STORY, edited by *Howard Moss*. Macmillan. $7.95. DO WITH ME WHAT YOU WILL, by *Joyce Carol Oates*. Vanguard. $7.95. BLACK CONCEIT, by *John Leonard*. Doubleday. $6.95. RUNAWAY HORSES, by *Yukio Mishima*. Alfred A. Knopf. $7.95. THE TEMPLE OF DAWN, by *Yukio Mishima*. Alfred A. Knopf. $7.95. ALL FIRES THE FIRE, by *Julio Cortázar;* tr. Suzanne Jill Levine. Pantheon. $5.95. HEARTBREAK TANGO, by *Manuel Puig;* tr. Suzanne Jill Levine. E. P. Dutton. $6.95. THE TRAPPER'S LAST SHOT, by *John Yount*. Random House. $6.95. SEARCHES AND SEIZURES, by *Stanley Elkin*. Random House. $6.95; paper, $3.45. A CROWN OF FEATHERS, by *Isaac Bashevis Singer*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $8.95.

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like angels caught in a magnetic field, between the mirror and the window." His great exemplar is Proust, who "plunges into the interior of the self," but also gives a flawlessly detailed "portrait of the external world." And, indeed, it seems to me that the finest stories of his collection are those which convince us of the presence of an organizing sensibility caught up in—and perhaps at the mercy of—the "reality" being described.

Not to say that there aren't successes of a more limited scope and scale. For example: "stories" that are really only elaborations of basic-premise images. Elizabeth Bishop's "In Prison" uses the title metaphor as a basis for the tantalizing, but enervating reflections of an imaginative protagonist whose solace consists in being sensitive to the restraints that justify lifelong inaction. John Logan's "The Success" is a poet at the psychiatrist's couch who stifles himself in static enthrallment to lush images and meaningful corerspondences: it's too risky to progress by plunging, head-on, into self-knowledge. And James Merrill's "Driver"—a bit more vivid, because somewhat more *open* in form?—uses a passionate lifelong attachment to automobiles as an informing image, to concretize the nature of a life lived always on the run.

It's apparent that stories centered in the viewing eye of an artist-persona can fail because of thinness—if they do not give us enough recognizable reality. More often, though, the stories here that fail to convince are consciously worked-up dramatizations of ideas, in which "the world" gets disproportionate attention, and the organizing sensibility is modestly subordinated to the realistic variousness around it.

There is a fruity piece of amateurish, laid-on "decadence," by Edna St. Vincent Millay—"The Murder in the Fishing Cat"—which I have seen elsewhere described as a masterpiece. It's a piece of forced epicurean gaiety, about a down-at-heels Parisian *restauranteur:* imaginative enough, but overextended, and written in a stiltedly "humorous" patois that sounds like nothing so much as the wearisome "Suicide Club" tales of Robert Louis Stevenson. Its tone of cloying urbanity is the obvious result of overattention to milieu—and period—detail.

Frank O'Hara's "On the Dangers of Daily Living" labors to bring forth an elliptically brittle sex comedy, through fragmenting the trickily brilliant chatter-conversation of some drearily "beautiful" people. The special-ness of their world is recreated with unnecessary accuracy. Donald Justice's "The Lady" charts the failure of humane sentiment in a liberal Southern-town doctor whose bigoted wife overpowers his timid decencies. It seems uncertainly constructed—wavering between the protagonist's suffering innerness and the corrupt old world of privileged myopia outside him. Justice may have wished not to overdo the sentient man's isolation; the story might have been more compelling, were it more frankly concentrated on him.

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A story that is far more skillfully ordered—"On the Island" by Josephine Jacobsen—contrives an elegant patchwork of primitivism and violence, to surround an "intellectual" couple vacationing in a Caribbean tourist (or death) trap. One knows that the comprehending persona *must* lose coherence and dwindle away, assaulted by the gorgeously articulated rain of images. But there's too much violence thus done to the pure linear march of the narrative. Don't the brilliant inventions take *too much* power unto themselves?

Anyway, I think that the best of Moss's chosen stories are those that deal openly with the idea of the dichotomy of Self and World: (to quote him again) ones which "take place somewhere between the window and the mirror—stories of revelation objectified to a point, but not to the point of realism."

Muriel Rukeyser's "The Club" describes the ironic, unexpected access of visionary power that accrues to a man who successfully murders his annoying wife. She is an impediment, he believes, to some necessary self-realization:

> He would have his life; nobody would keep him from it. He could be himself, come into his own powers, whatever they were, that had been kept from him. Some part of himself was out of reach. He would reach it.

The "understanding" accomplished has an unanticipated dark side. Still, his act constitutes a deliberate ordering of his experience. It's an aesthetic point, nearly an abstract one; but Rukeyser frames it in a fable, with an action to embody it, and an *observing* persona to comprehend it.

In Kenneth Koch's "The Postcard Collection," there is little pretense at surface "realism"; but a convincing personality is evoked, by sheer powerful concentration on exposed nerves and agitated emotions. The "collector" tries to decipher literal "truths" from unintelligible messages scribbled on postcards. He's naggingly conscious that he's a poet, and may be "reading too much in." Do people try to give a formal order to their lives, he wonders, by preserving in "messages" certainties that fail to apply in their lives? Or is this only the delusion of the literary man, who cannot see straight "reality" in its unruly simpleness? It is quite a trick, to render this confusion between the Self and the World so affectingly—while relying so nakedly on the viewpoint of "the artist." Koch is a marvelous, fluidly graceful writer.

So is Mona Van Duyn. Moss's "Note" tells us that "Her story 'The Bell' won second prize in the *Kenyon Review* short story contest of 1945." (My God, what won *first* prize?) It is the most "old-fashioned" of all these stories—a portrait of a sensitive child amid a family of unfeeling tyrants. Jane's intense perceptivity for sights and sounds keeps her ever vulnerable to the harsh disciplinarian "voices" of par-

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ents and grandmother. They tell her she'll recognize her *conscience,* as a little bell ringing in her head. The image stamps itself on her awareness, and grows into a monstrous reality. Van Duyn uses it as a transition-metaphor, dividing the child's world (rendered intensely, from deep inside) from the adult one. What Jane is taught to do, earns the delighted love of her elders, but is to her a *betrayal*—of what is inside. The gap between the Self and the World has not often been dramatized with such magical immediacy. (For "The Bell" alone, then, *The Poet's Story* is worth your attention. But it is, on all counts, a necessary book.)

"Somewhere between the window and the mirror" perhaps breathes truism: but it might be well to hold on to it, as one way of looking at stories and story-writers. Can you judge a writer's importance, or honesty—or maybe even his *intelligence*—by, specifically, the way he permits the Self to relate to the World? Every contemporary writer accepts, by implication, the ubiquity of the tension. One might almost say that the typical Muse nowadays presents her protegé with the option: Will you be a "mirror"-ist, and eschew "realism," to look inward; or a "window" writer, who'll tackle the world in all its complexity?

That's too simple: partly because it hearkens dutifully back to the conception of the nineteenth-century realists as arbiters, mediating between the eager-to-be-instructed reader and the rich chaos of the world. Dickens and Balzac accepted the burly complexity of experience, and were prepared to contrive a variety of devices to challenge its unintelligibility. Whereas the austerist modernists (Joyce, Kafka, Stein, Nabokov, Beckett, Borges) challenge reality by creating alternatives to it, worlds that obey their own laws, and destinies.

It may be in the awkward gap between these imaginative choices (where "the world" is ignored—because it won't fit desired patterns) that the real danger to art—and understanding—lies. Few writers who emphasize the individual sensibility would argue that its importance is primal, or independent. We can be microcosms, surely, only if one first presupposes some macrocosm. There's got to be a "world" to which the "self" can somehow relate.

It's as close to a rule as anything you'll find: the writer who's really obsessed by this complex mingling of the individual within the universal—by the sheer visceral *urge* to relate it all together, and make it *mean:* that's the writer who's really going to get to you. (An example is the new Nobel Prize winner, Australian novelist Patrick White. Not by any standard a graceful writer; but a raw powerful creative appetite, a novelist who's determined to do it *all.*)

Joyce Carol Oates is such a force: a pleasantly frail-seeming woman whom we suspect of undercurrent reserves of gargantuan energies. (If she ever wakes up aching all over, it must be because rival writers are sticking pins into little waxen images of her.) Nobody else writes nearly

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as much as she does. The really alarming thing is that so much of what she writes is good. *Do With Me What You Will* follows logically from her earlier fiction's obsession with violent dislocations seamed into the fabric of American society. We are a country of intensely destructive (and self-destructive) people, she seems to keep saying. What is there in us—and outside us—that makes us act as we do?

Oates's heroine here, Elena Carter, is an emotionless "little doll," brought up by her abrasive mother to project an image of bland angelic unconcern. Oates lavishes rich extremes of violence on Elena, but makes sure to leave her dulled, uninvolved. She has an untouchable inner life, but it is ruffled by just-awareness that she is a half-human vacuum:

> . . . one day in biology class Mr. Hollander was irritated by her bright, blank face. He had asked her a question and she knew the answer. But as she sat at her desk she had been invisibly pressing each of her fingers down, her fingertips pressing into the wool of her pleated skirt; she had been counting to herself in a perfect rhythm: ONE. TWO. THREE. FOUR. FIVE. SIX. SEVEN. EIGHT. NINE. TEN. She could not answer Mr. Hollander's question until she came to the end of this, she could not even hear it. First she must finish counting, she must complete the series of numbers, in that strict rhythm, not speeding up; then she was able to hear his question, to replay it to herself. But it was almost too late; it *was* too late. He was already asking the question again of another student and Elena had to interrupt him, and so he had been irritated. Puzzled. He had stared at her.

If that is a triumph of anything, it is concentration. There are many such passages; and what they say, essentially, is "Style be damned; the point must be made." Oates labors awfully hard to establish that Elena lives cramped up in mindless self-involvement. The novel doesn't really work, finally, because its contrasts are too extreme. But it couldn't progress at all without the contrasts, which are part of the *vision*.

Like all the Oates novels, it opens violently—as Elena is abducted by her (divorced) father, who neglects her into near-starvation. He's a resentful victim of "the Law"—and orates incessantly on its inequitable paradoxes: how Law rises out of antagonisms, is itself a source of conflict, rather than healing. And this time, the violence becomes subordinated to the dialectic—because Oates's theme is the tension between "the Law" and "Romantic love." A few sentences (the author's, presumably) on the dust-jacket sketch out for us a contrast between "the way of tradition" and "the way of spontaneous emotion," and hint at a "transformation" to "a more communal, transcendental love." The violence in us is viewed here as a cultural (perhaps

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religious) dysfunction, with roots deep down. Oates's narrative strives to show us how the tension takes hold everywhere in our lives.

Elena marries a famous trial lawyer, Marvin Howe (to him: "the law is what's left of divinity")—and goes to live in his mansion full of *things,* the former possessions of the clients who owe him everything. She takes a lover, Jack Morrissey, another lawyer, himself the inheritor of inescapable violence ("Jack felt his head throb with the precariousness of existence"). She nears "awareness" as a fascinated observer of Meredith Dawe ("Mered"), a hopeless client of Morrissey's —a saintly dropout who urges "the obliteration of matter" and the enthronement of "Love."

There is just about everything in this novel, and much of it is awful: Jack's long civil-rights sojourn in Mississippi; Howe's near-fatal airplane accident, part of a gangland plot; the successful career of Elena's sharp-eyed mother, as an incredible tv talk-show hostess; an interview with a befuddled rapist. There are some pretty limp swipes at satire: Howe presents the unexcited Elena with a "marriage contract" containing forty-five clauses; "Mered" Dawe cries out that his legalistic oppressors "believe in offal, but not in love" (if you can't make another word out of "Mered," you'll get no help from me); somebody in Mississippi is swatting flies with a rolled-up *New York Times.* What is *real* in the novel is the feeling that its characters, underneath their pretended attachments, really *don't* know who they are; that "This country is destroying people. . . . It's driving them crazy so that they destroy themselves."

Oates has a conclusion arranged: Elena sheds her fear that "All motion, all movement, was a kind of hell" and opts for involvement in the mess of living, even if the mere fate of being humans makes us criminals, because we're doomed to persist on in unresolved conflicts. The choice may not convince, because we've been prepared to accept that Elena is immobilized against choosing. But the harsh, menacing, reverberating world outside Elena Howe is a powerful enough reality, even if Oates cannot assimilate it within her design.

Of all the "serious" novels published recently, this may be the easiest one to make fun of. But it won't go away. And, it won't do to dismiss its author as a mad barbarian who can't put her house of fiction in order. She is one of those who know what life in this country and this century is like, and I believe she is, already, secure among our important writers.

John Leonard's *Black Conceit* holds both a realist's window and a satirist's mirror up to "nature" as she is envisioned by the visiting intellectuals. Its protagonists are people wishing to get involved in fundamental social "realities." Ken Coffin is on informal sabbatical from his job with a left-wing mag, "managing" the black apple-picking troops bussed in to his ancestral New England orchard-estate. His wife Marcy stays in Cambridge with the kids—teaching modern lit, quoting Sylvia

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Plath to herself, and wishing she wasn't such an indecisive fence-sitter. There's Rinsler, your standard bearded anarchist, who'll have no truck with overcomplexities, and knows an enemy when he sees one ("I keep losing people to drugs or jail or the army or New Hampshire").

The plot brings the Coffins through various "tests" to (very sensible) disillusionment. Ken stumbles unhappily onto an apple-pickers' orgy; a drunken canoeing stunt leads to bad ends of all sorts. Marcy keeps getting pushed up against various walls—by earnest male students, a trio of dirtymouthed punks, a horny "scientologist" and his brother experimenters. There is plot enough, but it seems only a topical pretext—a framework hammered together to string the gags on. There are some fine ones ("Yankee guile is as overrated as Jacqueline Kennedy"). The snotty bookish talk is usually better—and more thematic—than the snotty political talk ("Let Marcy play Sontag with herself; in Coffin's attic, art was didactic: Connect!"). Leonard is, as reviewers like to pretend they don't know, the editor of the *NYTBR*.

The following will indicate both Leonard's wit and his wide range of liberal reference:

> The quality of their commitment embarrassed and enthralled him; it was as though he had been tossing a Frisbee around while better human beings endured a long march, and now they marched into his living room and he had to eat the Frisbee. In fact, they did march into his living-room, at his invitation, Rinsler's janissaries, drop-outs, veterans of Southern jails and a thousand cups of instant coffee, communards who worked part-time in Filene's basement and were otherwise on the barricades, bad-mouthers of Saul Alinsky, Illich-freaks who felt that school itself was a detention center, Marcy an oppressor, books an insult to the singularity of their experience. Their scars glowed in the dark. All they ever seemed to eat was ice cream, and if they read at all, it was Hermann Hesse. . . .

This is labored, though it moves with a neat lilt. The witty tone is laid on like wallpaper-paste, the jokes set in as if by a dentist packing cavities. (How's that, Ma?) Some of the details are the expected ones, the transitions are a bit too carefully made: it's too damned "written."

But the Coffins themselves are interesting, more so than the archetypal "problems" Leonard sets their feet in; superior to the liberal attitudinizing they're made to exemplify. "Black Conceit" is a phrase from Melville, denoting the intellectual baggage a man carries with him, which influences all his decision-making. And, of course, it was the "coffin" that Ishmael was left clinging to. I wish Leonard made me think more about these things, less about his elegant phrase-making.

Yukio Mishima is a more extreme example of the Self's war with the World. A conservative militarist and emperor-worshipper, Mishima so

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loved the old gods of Japan that he thrust his fantasy on the world, and killed himself rather than see it rejected. The world knows the circumstances of Mishima's ritual suicide—after he, and a handful of fanatical disciples, attempted to take over the Japanese government by force. What are we to make of it now?—given the ghastly prefiguring of his fate in *Runaway Horses,* the second volume of the tetralogy he finished, and delivered to his publisher, on the day he died.

Reincarnation is the key concept in the cycle, and it frames a challenge to the present in the form of reverberating *exempla* from the past. Mishima's protagonist Honda, a judge unwisely vain of his balanced rationality, sees the world come apart around him. His beloved Kiyoaki (the doomed prince from volume one, *Spring Snow*) appears reborn in young Isao, a burning warlordish spirit committed to rouse up his complacent countrymen to primitive decisiveness. Isao engineers a complex of political crimes that spirals into murder; the enthralled, adoring Honda aspires to defend him. But Isao's "purity" is irreversible, and he goes down in flames of self-righteousness.

Mishima concentrates with masterly intensity on both "heroes." Each is unsettled by violent, destructive fantasies. We assume the observer-protagonist Honda is Mishima himself. Was Isao, then, an alternative which Mishima adopted in experiment, and thought he had discarded?

The Temple of Dawn is the third volume. (The fourth, *The Decay of the Angel,* will appear later this year. I await it eagerly, and with some uneasiness.) It brings Honda to a passionately unfulfilled old age, and the mocking persistence of reincarnated frustrations. Kiyoaki/Isao now seems again reborn—as a mysteriously "mad" Thai princess. Cruelly, Honda is ripped out of unemotional emptiness, and brought to painful life again. Unanswered questions plague him mercilessly. Mishima involves him with wickedly vivid minor characters; makes him a helpless, obsessed *observer.* Honda is enchanted by mysteries inherent in Buddhism and Hinduism (there are wearying pages of theorizing about reincarnation, the One-in-the-Many—that aren't well integrated into the narrative).

We have to guess that Honda is treated without real irony: that his searches for "the ontological form" that shapes human life are reflections of Mishima's thesis-insistence that *consciousness,* psychological *essence* is what survives, through the convolutions of process and destiny. Mishima is imposing an *idea* on a judiciously observed historical reality. The whole mad history of his country in its modern incarnation fits into the novelist's scheme; it must. The unthinkable alternative would be chaos.

Only occasionally does the idea fuse perfectly with the reality. Here is an image of indestructible unity, paradoxically contained in the description of a funeral pyre, glimpsed by Honda on a visit to Benares:

> The corpses were laid on the fire one after the other. As the bind-

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ing cords burned away and the red and white shrouds were consumed in the fire, a black arm would suddenly rise or a body would curl up in the fire as though turning over in sleep. The corpses that had been placed on the pyre first turned a dark gray. Sizzling sounds, like those of a pot boiling over, could be heard across the water. The skulls did not burn easily, and a cremator constantly walked about, poking a bamboo pole through the ones that were still smoldering well after the bodies had been reduced to ash. The sinews in his strong black arms that powerfully drove the pole through the skulls reflected the flames, while the crunching sounds he made reverberated against the temple walls.

That is magnificent—and the imagination that conceived it (whether suicidal, or only irretrievably burdened by the awful glut of "reality") is sure to have invented a capstone to the tetralogy that we cannot afford to miss.

In the meantime, better avoid the apocalypse as best you can. Pablo Neruda warns from the dust-jacket of *All Fires the Fire* that "Anyone who doesn't read [Julio] Cortázar is doomed."

Cortázar's tricky fable-stories fragment the World into extra-rational nightmares that question all the Self's "certainties." Point-of-view is hardly sacred (in one story, the interior monologues of separate characters *intersect;* in another, parallel narrative situations are *each* filtered through multiple character-narrators). "Reality" is what you think it is, and confused personae aren't even sure whether they inhabit a Roman gladiatorial arena, or a Paris apartment; the Parisian red-light district in wartime, or an Argentine café. Sometimes Cortázar seems more interested in the sheer fun of the contrivance than in any possible meaning. Example: an airplane steward, fascinated by his vision of a vague island shape floating below, finds himself drawn to the island—where reversed perspective now enthralls him with the image of an airplane overhead. What does it mean? That what we see is only what we *think* we see? Cortázar tells us that "Everything was falsified in the futile and recurrent vision. . . ." But nothing more.

In "The Health of the Sick," a doting family must construct an elaborate hoax to hide family tragedies from their adored, hypersensitive "Mama." With urbane indirection, and perfect pacing, Cortázar allows the hoax to replace the "reality." Best of all is "The Southern Thruway," in which an ominous traffic jam clogs dozens of journeying strangers together in an inexplicable existential impasse. Its victims are in a desert, surrounded by abandoned farmhouses, denied their fixed destination ("a city [that] sparkled in the distance . . ."). Elaborate defenses are adopted, responsibilities delegated, comforting relationships established: a microcosm of society is sedulously constructed. Suddenly, the enigma dissolves—as mysteriously as it had descended. The unity they had accomplished is unceremoniously dispersed, and the unifiers go their separate ways.

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One of the things the fictionist can do with "reality" is to play delighted games with it—and make us wonder whether *any* settled assumptions are trustworthy. In Cortázar's inside-out landscape, the staggeringly arranged windows and mirrors are props stolen from the fun-house.

Manuel Puig's *Heartbreak Tango* bombards us with "realism," arranging a terrifying welter of short, spasmodic fragments into a seedy "tragedy" that is coherent, poignant, and painfully funny. The setting is Buenos Aires in the 1940's-1960's; the characters are ambitious romantic daydreamers who all imagine—and act—out of an *idea* of the world which they derive from movies and radio serials.

Juan Carlos Etcheparé, loved by many women, dies of tuberculosis, cruelly young. His old love Nené, now unluckily married, writes secretive letters to Juan Carlos' mother. But his sister Celina, who can't stand Nené, fakes her mother's replies. Her friend Mabel dreams parallel dreams of impossible elegance, with a self-centered suitor. Mabel's friend Fanny, acting as her beloved radio heroines might, murders the lover who fails to marry her. These love affairs are seen from several viewpoints, and through a variety of teasing devices: scraps from many florid correspondences; diary notes; dance programs; itemized descriptions of rooms; questions-and-answers; medical reports; formal confessions; a fortune-teller's predictions. Sometimes Puig concentrates, minute-by-minute, on the detailed itinerary of a character's "day." He moves in and out of the novel surefootedly, sometimes commenting directly on his characters, or blandly offering lists and outlines to explain their motivations.

Though the novel is obviously *arranged* (into "Episodes," with quoted tango lyrics as epigraphs), a reader experiences it as a rich loose array of directly rendered personalities. Somehow, Puig does it by very consciously *varying* the kinds of attention that he brings to bear on his characters. We sense the keen compassionate intensity with which the Self (this time, the narrator-organizer's) views the World.

John Yount's *The Trapper's Last Shot* skillfully conceals a rigid deterministic design beneath its bracingly realistic picture of a small Georgia town in the grip of what seem only stray ugly outcroppings of failure. We see the weatherbeaten, red-clayey, frustrated world through the novelist's window; but the subsurface ordering of its events reveals how he has examined that world in the mirror, and seen the ominous interlocking configurations that show its subservience to destiny.

One of its heroes is Beau Jim Early, out of the army, and bound homeward, for no special reason. He gets cheated by a used-car salesman, tries to go to college, hopes to love a bluff, brassy big girl—to *do something* ("He was going to amount to something, for he had grown tired of being nobody"). Beau Jim's present rootlessness grows out of his hunger to capture in his memory a settled past, family, and

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origins. But he can command only fragments—and focusses on the unsettling image of a painting (the title one) which shows a trapper pursued by murdering Indians, at the tailend of his flight for survival ("He saw himself as the trapper, the very brother of hard times").

Beau Jim's uneasiness is paralleled by the story of his older brother Dan: married to a complaining wife, mired on a sullen stretch of farmland that refuses to prosper. Dan dreams of plenty, works himself into madness—his inarticulateness gradually transforming itself into *understanding,* of the vicious way his world makes sense: things are simply unjust ("the niggers acrost the road have water," though he doesn't; his daughter must go to school with them).

Events work themselves out with awful consistency. The opening scene establishes a near-biblical sense of "judgment," when a snake-infested pond must be dynamited; later, a school is blown up. There's a shotgun made much of, in the opening pages; and, as Chekhov said, if you've got one hanging on the wall in Act I, it must be fired off by Act V. The same kinds of things keep happening. The world that these people inhabit is a trap.

Yount's description of Dan's "understanding," too, reveals the author, staked out behind the novel's surface:

> But he could feel specters around him in the dark, and they seemed not simply constituted of his own ignorance and bad luck, but of another quality too, symptomatic of the times and willfully destructive.

That's a thematic statement, as well as a glint of characterization, and an indication of motive. We accept it, I think, as we accept such moments in Faulkner: because the milieu has been reproduced so faithfully, and the characters' relatedness to it so firmly drawn, that the characters can extend beyond what seem *set* limitations, and the reader will follow them. The last fifty pages, in fact, may lean too heavily on Faulkner; and the conclusion certainly ties loose ends together a little too neatly. But this novel's people keep after you—as the destroyed Dan Early haunts the imagination of his surviving brother ("quietly, deferentially, stalking some corner of his mind").

Its awareness of the World has ruefully lurid consequences for the Self in Stanley Elkin's *Searches and Seizures,* three short novels which *may* be related in the way Elkin's prefactory note suggests—i.e., that "each . . . protagonist is a bachelor . . . , and each is concerned . . . with death." In fact, each story is the richly comic detailing of a "search" that is rewarded, not with its desired object, but with a painfully unanticipated revelation (a "seizure"), teaching the searcher what he has not wished to learn. Experience is a mean son-of-a-bitch, the sly Stanley Elkin implies; you may learn things from it, but it can kill you.

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"The Bailbondsman" is Alexander Main, Phoenician (*Phoenician?*) by birth ("My people . . . wrote the first bailbond"), a slick "public servant" who makes "other men's difficulties my heritage"—involving himself with crime and criminals because he's desperate to learn what makes men act as they do. A brilliant nightmare-parallel is evoked, as Main dreams of a robbery in an ancient Phoenician palace/crypt: trying to "go bail" for the luckless robbers, he finds that an imperturbable authority simply frees them. (In the real world, too, things are going badly, for the law's new permissiveness is making bailbondsmen virtually obsolete.) Elkin twists the real and the imaginary together with compelling eccentric force. The methodical legalist must learn that there are "limits to his power and his own precious freedom." Elkin leaves Main madly stalking certainties ("All I wanted . . . was to know things. . . . That's what attracted me to you guys, you mugs and malefactors . . .") ("I'm honest, but the fucking laws are leaking . . . God Himself nothing but a slow leak, some holy puncture . . .").

In "The Making of Ashenden," the World outrageously compromises the Self's meanderings toward its ideal. Brewster Ashenden is the oldest living playboy, still in search of himself, unable to decide what's expected of him. A paragon of superfluous virtues, he is both an epicurean looking for exciting new sensations, and "classical, drawn by perfection as to some magnetic, Platonic pole. . . ." A celebrated society princess accepts his devotion, and (true to her fairy-tale associations) sets him a task: to make himself pure again. Ashenden thinks "pure thoughts for three hours"; then, while wandering through the private zoo on a friend's London estate (Elkin is nothing if he's not inventive), is accosted by a 700-pound female bear, *in heat,* who has her own task to set for him.

If you think you've read everything, here is the story for you. The man-bear sex scene is vigorous, raunchy, painful, smelly—and downright *touching.* To Ashenden, it is relevation ("What this means . . . is that my life has been too crammed with civilization. . . . I have been too proud of my humanism, perhaps, and all along not paid enough attention to the base"). The "making" of Ashenden is the *humbling* of him.

"The Condominium" is more diffuse, though it has its own crazy power. Its hero, Marshall Preminger, inherits his father's condo-dominium in Chicago—a stratified, moneyed "microcosm" which makes its own laws and worships its own comfy gods. Preminger is a professional lecturer, the possessor of a heart condition; a man with a awkward "sense of justice," who wishes to make things *make sense.* He is struck by "wonder at the immense wealth in America, at the vast depth on its bench. Who *were* these people? How could they have gotten so much money?" Preminger's "seizure" is the most literal among the blows that fall on Elkin's searching heroes.

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It is also a vision—of the squeezing of all their lives into neat safe packages, stored behind walls of indifferenc and drowned out by their grotesque litany of materialism. The overstuffed, hyperactive world on which Elkin's window opens may defeat those who try to contend against it. But it is itself awesomely compact and coherent, at the mercy of a judiciously savage ordering intelligence.

Isaac Bashevis Singer's latest collection of stories, *A Crown of Feathers* asserts the artist's deepening fear that chaos may lie all around us; that the act of ordering may be sheer self-delusion. Even stories that differ widely in plot and tone grind out the same pessimistic message. A writer-lecturer, lost in an unfriendly city, with no personal contacts and no money, angrily concludes that he is, as a Jew, being "tested," re-educated in despair: "The cabalists are right: ours is the worst of all created worlds. Satan rules here". . . A beleaguered woman spends her life mysteriously losing things; then, finally, herself disappears. Her fate provokes the chilling comment: "If matter can turn to nothing, all of nature is a nightmare" . . . And these are the words of a Jewish artist who can't understand why he, or anyone else, persists, against the evidence of meaningless: "In a world where human beings are burned in gas ovens, what point is there in art? The whole nonsense should be ended."

The heroes of many of these stories are artists-in-exile, attempting to reconcile the evidence of the world's illogical disarray with their dwindling sense that the old, determined dream of wise and decent men—that the World has meaning, and the Self can discover it—is something more than a painful anachronism. Most of these stories relentlessly dramatize the failure of the dream. Their recurring protagonist is a Yiddish writer recently emigrated to America from Europe. He writes stories for the Yiddish-language newspapers, and maintains quasi-distant acquaintances with a babbling motley of countrymen and colleagues—who espouse radcal socialist politics ("Property"), or extreme varieties of *art* ("The Bishop's Robe"). Often, he basks in the frightened love of intensely willing women ("The Egotist"). He retells stories told to him by compatriots eager to communicate their agonies ("A Quotation from Klopstock," "The Beard").

Beneath the dulling sameness of the settings (most of the stories-within-stories are passed among customers at dingy cafeterias), there are intimations of mysterious unfathomable ruling powers which exert themselves through sudden strokes of good, then bad fortune ("The Lantuch"). The enigmas thus central in their experiences impel Singer's characters to torture themselves with metaphysical questions. Akhsa, the heroine of "A Crown of Feathers," rejects the suitor proffered by her grandfather, warned by the "voice" of her dead grandmother. A "sign from heaven" (the crown of feathers, sewn inside her pillow) seems to confirm her decision. Then a con-

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tradictory sign appears, and Akhsa becomes a woman maddened by the claims of conflicting "truths." She worships the devil, and *he* grants her a vision. To atone for her "iniquities," she seeks out her abandoned suitor—now an insane zealot, to whose "penances" she meekly submits. Akhsa dies with all her questions unanswered; the complications, in fact, have multiplied. It is a bitter, brilliant rendering of the ethereality of religious "truth."

There is an added dimension in the stories set in America—for Singer's brooding emigrés must sense the mysterious contrast between their new country's pragmatic concreteness and the demon-infested otherworldliness that follows them from the old one. The impenetrable mysteriousness of what has happened to them becomes the force that rules their lives. The writer-narrator of "The Captive" slowly comprehends—as he is drawn into—the story of an obsession that begins in Warsaw in the twenties, spans several decades, and ends in an imprisoning cycle of greed and deception. In New York, in 1940, the artist Tobias Anfang tells the narrator about "impressionist" painter Zorach Kreiter, a mad, dedicated anachronism—whose stubborn courage Anfang pretends to scorn. Years later the narrator meets Anfang again, in Israel—where he is trying "to be a Jew . . . find a way to Jewish art." The painter-skeptic seems to have come under the spell of the dead Kreiter's *presence:* with Kreiter's businesslike widow directing, Anfang is faking "recovered" Kreiter paintings. The copies are perfect. Is Anfang indeed *possessed* by the dead artist's spirit? Anfang is still skeptical, doesn't know what he believes. Kreiter's widow claims her husband "speaks" to her. The narrator, too, becomes their "captive." Are these people charlatans?—or are they in the power of forces that defy understanding?

It's the kind of question that the best fiction writers wisely refuse to answer. In these marvelous, moving stories, the purest kind of open form is operating: setting the world vibrantly before us, concentrating our own attention on our own developing responses—inviting us to draw conclusions, if we dare, or can. However well we think we know them, the old forms still entice, surprise, and reveal. The more things remain the same, the more they change.

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J. E. CHAMBERLIN

Higher Economics

THE CORPUS OF THEOLOGICAL and Christological speculation which was passed down through the ages from the Fathers of the Church provided the nineteenth century with one of its most typical fascinations. It is the premise of James Finn Cotter's book on Gerard Manley Hopkins[1] that if we cannot comprehend that fascination, then we cannot comprehend Hopkins' poetry, at least not rightly or fully. For since it is the "inward and distant mark" of the Christian poetic imagination which quite literally defines Hopkins' celebrated sense of "inscape," and informs all of his poetry (indeed, all of his writing), and which the reader is supposed to apprehend in a kind of gnostic awareness which he called "instress," it is in Cotter's opinion reasonable and right to insist that when Hopkins directs the reader to "Mark Christ our King," he means precisely what he says. It is the truth and the way of that meaning and that saying which Cotter seeks to provide, using as his sheet anchor the methodology of Christian explication known as exegesis. The fixed point is, naturally enough, "*Ipse,* the only one, Christ, King, Head," "the who and the why" of existence, the efficient and final cause of creation, through whom and in whom the loveliness and the beauty, the scape and the stress, of all things are affirmed,

> Since, tho' he is under the world's splendour and wonder,
> His mystery must be instressed, stressed;
> For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand.

There are, of course, glosses to be added—nineteen centuries worth, transformed in Hopkins' not so subtle but highly idiosyncratic imagination. Cotter presents all of this in exhaustive and sometimes exhausting detail, and establishes what he calls Hopkins' "myth" with impressive success, and with the obvious feeling that it is both necessary and sufficient for a full reading of his poetry. I am nearly convinced of its necessity, but not of its sufficiency.

Basic to this myth, and to Cotter's exegesis, is the concept of a divine economy, in which Christ is the central figure, both one with the Father in power, as the divine creator of the world (his *forma Dei*), and at the same time and throughout all time obedient to the Father, becoming man to redeem the world through a sacrifice of his self (his

[1] INSCAPE: THE CHRISTOLOGY AND POETRY OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, by *James Finn Cotter*. University of Pittsburgh. $11.95.

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forma servi). A clever and marvellously closed economy, which from one perspective has all the interest of a cosmic isometric exercise. This is no mean appeal, and certainly the tension of many of Hopkins' most successful poems conforms to this analogy. In fact, any other perspective places enormous demands on the reader, yet they are the demands of the poet himself, for the idea which animates this divine scheme was genuinely and crucially important to Hopkins, and the scheme itself becomes significant if and only if the idea of it is "knowable" in the most complete and intense way. Hopkins takes this kind of "knowing" as the subject of his poetry, and attempts to create conditions for our assent. These conditions are in the end neither spiritual nor secular, but purely imaginative, purely poetic, "Wording it how but by him that present and past,/Heaven and earth are word of, worded by." The purity of the imaginative acknowledgment which Hopkins desires is of such a rare and splendid kind that most readers of Hopkins, most of the time, are content with much less. And well might we be content, for this much less is still very much: a second-hand Christ, perhaps, but still a Christ, passed on by the apostles; the "brute beauty and valour and act" of the kestrel's flight, with only a vague sense of the climactic "Buckle!" (or is it "oh," or "O"?); all the gems in creation, except diamond. And yet it was "Christ being me and me being Christ" and the "immortal diamond" which Hopkins spoke of, and united in one celebrated experience,

> In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
> I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, and
> This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal
> diamond,
> Is immortal diamond.

Unlike Henry Vaughan, say, with whom the Victorian poet is often compared, Hopkins sometimes simply loses his reader. So we go back to our own touchstones, which are in general neither exegetical nor eschatological. But this is clearly not what Hopkins hoped.

His patristic models were specific and demanding; for example, St. Irenaeus, with his theory of the *recapitulatio,* viewing "all history and creation as capsulated in Christ who now fills the universe in turn. He comes at the midpoint and centre of time and sums up in himself the beginning and end of the world in one *oikonomia* or household of God." The principal text for this theory of the recapitulation was the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians 1:9-10, which deals with "the mystery of his will . . . which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." Two points are central here: firstly, the teleological structure (and Christ as the "telos") of the reality which is acknowledged (and the knowledge of which will, according to Hopkins, "give life

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an aim, *scopos*"); and secondly, the unity of God and nature, which converge in the person of Christ. The first underlies the concept of "inscape" which Hopkins developed; and the second makes its "knowing" or "instress" a proper subject for poetry, and for a Jesuit priest. Both together provide that sense of possible glory and available joy which Hopkins, no less than Wordsworth, felt to be latent in all experience. Of Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality* ode, Hopkins remarked that "in Wordsworth when he wrote that ode human nature got another of those shocks, and the tremble from it is spreading. This opinion I do strongly share; I am, ever since I knew the ode, in that tremble." It is that shock and tremble which Hopkins sought to communicate, and to recreate, as we read of the experience of the tall nun in *The Wreck of the Deutschland:*

> Ah! there was a heart right!
> There was single eye!
> Read the unshapeable shock night
> And knew the who and the why . . . .

But what if our heart is not right; if we, like the Welsh and the English, are fallen in heresy, or worse; if we will not or cannot "let him easter in us." Then our plight is clear, as clear as the Victorian imagery which Hopkins employed:

> We, life's pride and cared-for crown,
>
> Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:
> Our make and making break, are breaking, down
> To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime.

Without that particular sense of joy and acknowledgment of glory to which the poems refer, we are not able to "read the unshapeable"; and we miss much in Hopkins' poetry if we do not recognize that the clever, contrived shape of his verse embodies and expresses the paradox that the apprehension of its subject is essentially inchoate.

But there are still ways of diminishing our disengagement, for the intellectual fascinations of the century in which Hopkins lived were not confined to the exegetical musings of the Church Fathers. Indeed, these are only representative of a type of imaginative enterprise which had a fairly clear structure, though it encompassed a wide range of subjects; and an attention to that structure can be used to harmonize the secular and the spiritual, nature and God, in a manner that makes more available the wonderful accomplishment of Hopkins' own music (and that, incidentally, makes more apparent the link with the thought of S. T. Coleridge which Cotter is at pains to establish). To take just one line: St. Irenaeus' theory of recapitulation, proposed *Adversus Haereses,* had a secular analogue in the nineteenth century. In 1818, Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire published his *Philosophe anatomique,* in which he argued that Nature had formed all living things upon one

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plan, and that all structures could and should be referred to a generalized abstract type. In Germany, the advocates of "Naturphilosophie" were convinced of a parallelism between the development of the individual, and the evolution of the race. These two strands were joined by the biologists Meckel and Serres, in what became known as the Meckel-Serres law. This "law" combined Serres' assumption that "one and the same organ, however complicated its definitive form, repeats in its transitory states the organic simplicities of the lower class," with Meckel's "law of parallelism," which stated that "the development of the individual organism obeys the same laws as the development of the whole animal series; that is to say, the higher animal, in its gradual evolution, essentially passes through the permanent organic stages which lie below it." After evolutionary theory became prominent, this concept became known as the "biogenetic law" (Ernst Haeckel), or the "law of recapitulation," and was used to assert that the embryological development of the members of any species repeats the evolution of the genus to which the species belongs. It was sometimes formulated in the statement that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," and proved very useful in some questionable sociological and psychogenetic speculation which took place near the end of the last century, and which left clear traces in this. In aesthetic theory, Herbert Read suggested that it "provided confirmation for the general validity of the generic method in aesthetics."

The crucial issue which was addressed in such speculation, and which provided both inspiration and form for the theoretical fiction which evolved, was the nature of the design or order which was perceived in the natural world—the nature of Nature; and, more specifically, an explanation of the "economies" which appeared to be evident in natural processes, and in the products of those processes. These economies were felt to be other than haphazard, and indeed were seen as the key both to the structure of that which was revealed to man (whether natural, social, aesthetic, or religious), and to the character of that revelation. In other words, this "economy" reflected the operation of man's reason; and since (from one point of view) man's reason was a reflection of God's, the theological implication of all this was simply that the Word continues active in the word, or that the divine economy is evident in our discovery of the inscape, the informing design, of all created and creative phenomena, and should be evident in our formulation of this experience of discovery. "Nature," as Newton said, "is pleased with simplicity"; and God is pleased with Nature. Hopkins, like so many others of his time, sought to reaffirm the importance of order and design in the natural world, and in doing so to "prove" the immediacy and the economy of the design and order of the divine strategy. As he wrote to Bridges, "as air, melody, is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern, or what I am in the habit of calling 'inscape' is what I above all aim at in poetry." To unite the striving which is incorporate with

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this "aim," and the accomplishment which is signified by the "mark" to which this aim is directed, was Hopkins' hope. It is a purpose which has clear analogies in the intellectual as well as spiritual life of the age in which he lived; the principle at work, and the ubiquitous fascination which it held, is a methodological one. Its understanding provides, I think, a critical key to the appreciation of Hopkins' poetry, in the way, though possibly not with quite the effect, that Hopkins intended.

The devising of intellectual and imaginative structures which would unite in many subject areas the beginning and the end, aim and mark, cause and effect, was a central feature of the investigations of many of the most creative minds of the nineteenth century. (One of its most enduring monuments, perhaps, is that body of thought which owes its origin to the philosophical tenets of positivism.) While Newman, Pusey, Liddon, and Hopkins were in their own individual ways attempting to realize the immanent character of the divine presence, since they felt that an over-emphasis on the transcendent features stood in the way of a true religion, Ernst Mach was attempting to "get rid of metaphysical obscurities" in the apprehension of the reality with which science is concerned, obscurities which he felt stood in the way of a true science. The methods, the terms of reference, and the "telos" which informs the investigation of each group are basically similar; and it would have been interesting to see what Hopkins might have made of the "sort of popular account of Light and the Ether" which he proposed to write, for he felt that "the study of physical science has, unless corrected in some way, an effect the very opposite of what one would suppose. One would think it might materialise people (no doubt it does make them, or rather I shd. say, they become materialists: they do not believe in Matter more but in God less)." *Natura* is, after all, the Latin rendering of the Greek *physis*. When V. I. Lenin attacked Mach, Avenarius and Poincaré in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (subtitled *Critical Notes on a Reactionary Philosophy*), he attacked an intellectual and imaginative tradition of which Hopkins was part, and of which he was in many ways the most eloquent spokesman. And this tradition was by no means a purely theological one.

Cotter makes some connections here, though it is admittedly not his specific subject; but his general subject is the reading of Hopkins' poetry, and the reader would be greatly assisted by a fuller sense of perspective on his Christological speculations. Carlyle and Pater provide Cotter with a conveniently close reference; and Pater's celebrated questioning of how we shall "pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy" is one which Cotter attempts to answer in his book, with particular attention, naturally enough, to the "pure energy" of Hopkins' poetry. From Pater to the subject of music is a short step, and a happy one, for music serves as an impor-

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tant link between the Christological and the aesthetic interests which are evident in Hopkins' poetry, and for the reading of which we need an understanding. And here too we touch on one of the major faults of this book.

Hopkins was intensely interested in music, spending many hours composing (and thinking and writing about musical theory, an early Adrian Leverkühn); developing a theory of rhythm (in which he makes obvious his debt to St. Augustine's *De Musica,* and to his idea of the *carmen universitatis*); celebrating "so arch-especial a spirit as heaves in Henry Purcell"; and seeing in music what Cotter calls "the inner ontogeny of the Orphic Word who tunes the universe and strings the heart of man." Specific reference is made to Christ as the true Orpheus, imaged in the lyre, and in its archetypal Omega form. The idea is central to Christian tradition, and received weighty attention at the hands of the Church Fathers.

It is here that Cotter misses his chance. For his thesis is that Hopkins was "a Christian Gnostic as that ideal has been defined by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and sought a 'new Mythus,' in Carlyle's phrase, for his Christian beliefs." And these beliefs were centred, according to Cotter, around the idea of the real presence of Christ in the world, both at one time and for all time, as well as out of time. Now the "historical" research of the Fathers of the Church (Cotter refers to St. Irenaeus, for example, as "the first Christian philosopher of history") provided the basis for the distinctive and much commented upon "realism" of medieval Christian art and literature, and for the imagery and iconography which sustained that tradition. The method of explication which Cotter employs relies very heavily upon the legacy of images and iconographic paraphernalia which were invented by the Church Fathers, but he curiously refrains from establishing the conditions within which this imagery can be seen to reinforce, if indeed it does not itself create, the sense of reality and immanent presence of the Word which is Hopkins' subject. For instance, consider the symbolism of the lyre or harp. In the Old Testament prefigurations of the Passion of Christ, especially with reference to Job and Jeremiah (who was known in the Middle Ages as "Hiob citharista"), patristic exegesis compared Christ's crucifixion and death on the cross to a harp, and to its music; and David's apparent invocation of the muse or Holy Spirit in the Psalm for Easter (LV1)—"Exsurge, gloria mea; exsurge, psalterium et cithara" ("Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp")--falls into a pattern which focuses in the person and action of Christ. (For the record, the harp, the lyre, and the "cithara" are effectively synonymous in Old Testament sources.) Patristic interpretation identified these words as the call of Christ to "arise," the exsurrection which precedes the resurrection; "psalterium" and "cithara" are matched by Christ as Son of God and as Man. "Everywhere in the Psalms where there is ref-

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erence to the harp," Augustine commented, "we are to understand Christ as man in his suffering." Extended, this metaphor becomes the conceit that God is the divine musician who made music on his harp at the Crucifixion. All of this was central to Hopkins' myth, as it was, for example, to that of George Herbert: "His stretched sinews taught all strings what key/Is best to celebrate this most high day." Now Cotter obviously would recognize all this, but in the pitch of excitement with which his book closes, he does little except leap from analogy to analogy, associating imagery of the lyre, the bow, and the horn, with the meaning and form of Inscape and Omega (the title of his last chapter). But *why* are they associated? (We know, at least in abstraction, in whom.) What is there in Christian tradition which links them all with the person of Christ, and, more importantly, which establishes them as central to Christian art and literature. Well, they look alike, of course. But the links are much more immediate, and they are so simply because they are all specifically connected with the symbolism of the Crucifixion, in a way which is a striking legacy of patristic exegesis. Cotter is so bemused by his patristic and apostolic sources that he neglects some of the most obvious and most immediate of these connections. For its own sake, this is not worth mentioning; but the sad fact is that Cotter thereby loses precisely what he has taken so much trouble to stalk, which is the sense of excitement which this symbolism, and the inspiration (to "make sense" of the divine economy) behind it, can create.

The bow, the stress which it embodies, and the scheme (of aiming at and hitting a mark) which it represents, provided Hopkins with one of his favourite figures; it is also, next to the harp, the most common symbol of the Crucifixion, with the advantage that it is eminently representable. And the horn, one of Hopkins' synonyms for the bow, also has an enchanting richness. When horns are associated in Biblical tradition with light and splendour, they are beams of light (as in the prophecy to be found in Habbakuk 3:4—"Splendor ejus ut lux erit; cornua in manibus ejus" ("And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand")); associated with sacrifice, they are the "corners" of the altar to which the offering is bound. Finally, "cornua" can also refer to the pegs of a musical instrument, and we have come full circle to the comparison of the Crucifixion to the harp of David. And along the way, we have touched on the major images upon which Hopkins relies, in a manner that is curiously close to the aesthetic demands created by a poem such as *The Dream of the Rood*. This kind of illumination seems to me crucial simply because these symbols, reflecting as they do that divine economy of which we have spoken and upon which religious art inevitably depends, carry much of the burden of Hopkins' poetry, and display in their own bodying forth of the reality which they represent the kind of process to which Hopkins' mimetic art aspired, "hold(ing) to Christ the mind's own mirror out."

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BERNARD BERGONZI

Here's to You, Mr. Robinson

THE TITLE OF IAN ROBINSON'S BOOK is unprovocative enough,[1] but it is a work of sharply polemical cultural criticism, which has been widely and respectfully reviewed in England. The author is a lecturer in English at the University College of Swansea, Wales, who has previously written two books on Chaucer. He is the latest in a long line of disciples and admirers of F. R. Leavis, and to the best of my knowledge, one of the few who have not been repudiated or abandoned by the Master, now a thunderous octogenarian. Robinson continues the central thrust of Leavis' arguments, whilst giving them a degree of philosophical sophistication they never possessed in their original form. The essays in his book range over many aspects of contemporary British culture: the present state of religious language, with particular reference to the New English Bible; the languages of politics and journalism, pornography and love poetry. In writing about language, Robinson, in effect, writes about anything that interests him, and he throws off opinions on many subjects with all the disdainful confidence of a Victorian sage.

Robinson is not a particularly original thinker; but he is a very skilful combiner of ideas from different sources, and he brings a persuasive moral intensity to the combination. From Leavis, and from a tradition stretching back beyond Leavis to Coleridge, he takes the conviction that man is an essentially creative animal, and that this creativity shows itself not merely in artistic activity but in basically making sense of life, even, perhaps, in the very act of perception. Above all, creativity arises in the essentially human process of recognizing and creating values. With a slightly different emphasis, this same fundamental process can be called "criticism," an activity which Robinson sees as far more extensive than the professional business of the literary critic; more extensive, even, than Matthew Arnold's broad use of the word. Part of Robinson's strategy is to abolish the conventional distinction between the creative and the critical. This does not stop him from sniping at academic literary critics whenever he has the chance, but he complains, too, of pupils "who, having concentrated their intelligence and seriousness upon evaluating a writer who matters to them, will refer to their work as mere criticism, as against the real creative thing, the formless verses they toss off at idle moments. . . ." This strand of Robinson's argument culminates in his assertion that Leavis is a great creative writer, and the dominant genius of our age, with a stature and place comparable to Dr. Johnson's in his day.

Robinson follows Leavis in finding value not in any disembodied

[1] THE SURVIVAL OF ENGLISH: Essays in criticism of language, by *Ian Robinson*. Cambridge University Press. $11.50.

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or ideal form but concretely realized in language, "here, here and here," as Leavis would put it. From the later Wittgenstein Robinson takes the idea of language as the medium whereby meanings are created, preserved and transmitted, in ways that transcend merely personal volition. Such meanings are not necessarily or inevitably "values" in the Leavisian sense, though Robinson habitually regards them as such; presumably he would dismiss the possibility of value-free meanings. In doing so, he would be in good company; part of his argument links up with a phenomenological approach in recent philosophical and political thought, which rejects the whole notion of objectivity as part of a falsely positivistic world-view (or in Leavisian terms, a "technologico-Benthamite" one). In this perspective, value always appears as part of a particular human intentionality and context. Here Robinson comes close to the more humane schools of Marxist thought, though Marxists would recoil from Robinson as a ferociously reactionary and elitist thinker. Robinson fuses Wittgenstein and Leavis pretty well, though not without strain; at least, I sense a pull, which never quite rises to the surface of his argument, between Wittgenstein's understanding of language as collective, impersonal, social, and Leavis' constant emphasis on individual creativity and responsibility. Robinson might have helped his own argument if he had made use of the fashionable but very useful distinction in linguistics between *langue* and *parole:* the totality of possible resources in a language and the particular utterance. It is true that Robinson's Wittgensteinian mode of thought gives his cultural criticism a much greater point and sharpness than that of the *Scrutiny* school in general; for all their gestures towards the cultural health of society at large they were, most of the time, much more concerned with the criticism of specific literary works. Robinson sees language itself as directing and forming our ideas and affective responses; making it literally possible for some things to be thought or felt or said in a particular culture, whilst excluding other possibilities. Robinson's thought runs parallel to the sociology of knowledge, though without ever acknowledging the work that has been done in that field; his sociological ignorance, or sociological naïveté, does strike me as a weakness.

Where Wittgenstein wrote of "language" in general, Robinson is concerned with "*a* language," namely English (and British English, too, I'm afraid), which is a bold stroke of manipulation. By the "Survival of English" Robinson refers to that living medium in which the values and beliefs and aspirations of the English people have been encoded since the time of Chaucer, "well of English undefiled," as Spenser called him. Here Robinson shifts from cool linguistic analysis to a quite passionate kind of cultural nationalism. This line of thought has always been implicit in the Leavisian approach, which stresses the peculiarly English sanity, as manifested in their language, of Chaucer and Shakespeare and Donne and Jane Austen and Lawrence, with Dickens as a notable late addition to the sacred tradition; an approach

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which in its less vigilant moments can lapse into the near-sentimentalities of Merrie England. But Robinson is a more political writer than Leavis, with a right-wing bias rare in English literary intellectuals; he is prepared to draw practical conclusions that Leavis prefers to leave unstated. Robinson is, in fact, an admirer of Mr. Enoch Powell, particularly in his vehement opposition to British membership of the Common Market.

When he comes to discuss particular forms of cultural activity Robinson's premise is that value is always wholly immanent in language; that the Medium is in fact the Message. (The invocation of this famous slogan is by no means inappropriate, however little Robinson would approve of its author, for McLuhan too was once a Leavisite.) When Robinson analyses the verbal infelicities and inconsistencies of tone and register in the New English Bible and the new Anglican prayer book he scores hit after hit. Of course, contemporary religious English is infinitely impoverished compared with the Authorized Version; why not therefore continue to make do with the Authorized Version, or at least the Revised Standard version, asks Robinson? He brushes aside the objection that seventeenth-century religious English is virtually unintelligible to many modern readers by saying that it is no more and no less unintelligible than the plays of Shakespeare, which are still performed and appreciated in their original English (though he is aware of sinister recent attempts to "translate" Shakespeare). Here we come to the heart of Robinson's position: for him, and for the tradition which he writes in, the value of Shakespeare or indeed of any supremely great literature is not merely "literary"; it possesses the fundamental human significance that can plausibly be called "religious" (Leavis has on occasion made the connection specifically). So that, for Robinson, reading Shakespeare and reading the English Bible are not radically different kinds of activity. Christians, however much they might appreciate Mr. Robinson's sympathetic concern with the problems of religious language, would, I believe, reject his assumption that all value is immanent in language, since they are ultimately committed to a transcendent value, or truth, that lies beyond any particular language. That is to say, granted that reading the Greek Testament or the Vulgate or English or French translations of scripture are very different cultural and linguistic experiences, there is still a sense in which they all point to a shared experience that transcends these particular differences. If there were not then Christianity could not exist as a world religion.

As literary critics, we would, I suppose, agree that in reading a poem "form" and "content" cannot and must not be separated, since they are functions of each other; here, certainly, the medium *is* the message. Robinson, however, believes that this is true of all verbal communication, even the most non-literary, since his premises do not make any basic distinction between literary and non-literary use of language. A sermon, a political speech, a pamphlet, can all be subjected to critical scrutiny of their use of English. If the language is inflated or trivial

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or deceptive then the communication is valueless, and there is no more to be said; thus, Robinson has no difficulty in exposing the corruption of English political life by exposing the corruption of language in the speeches of Mr. Wilson and Mr. Heath. The one inevitably implies the other. On politics he mightn't be so far wrong, and politicians can look after themselves. But many other uses of language come to mind where Robinson must be seen as simply mistaken; form and content *can* be separated, and often are. Take, for instance, a love-letter, which may be no more than a tissue of clichés, or those pathetic bits of home-made doggerel that occur in the obituary columns of English provincial newspapers. Must one conclude that the inadequacy of the language reflects the inadequacy of the love or grief thereby expressed? One recoils from any such conclusion; at this point, I believe, Robinson's theory of language breaks down decisively. Again, as with the discussion of religious language, one needs to see the language not as an embodiment of value but as a pointer to values and meanings lying beyond it. I believe that a fruitful model can be found in Peter Berger's *A Rumour of Angels,* which argues that human gestures, whether verbal or of other kinds, are signs, however faltering and inadequate, of transcendence and permanence.

After so much disagreement with Robinson's arguments it might be wondered whether I find anything at all to agree with in his book. The answer is, quite a lot; and even where I don't agree I admire the superb wit and energy and lucidity with which he conducts his polemic. The finest part of his book is, I think, in the two chapters called "Notes on the Language of Love," parts one and two; the first on pornography, the second on love poetry. Robinson makes by far the most convincing attack on Western sexual permissiveness that I have so far read; he exposes the heartless liberal atomism that regards sex as a strictly individual business, where everybody does their own thing, and doesn't interfere with other people, and that's all that need be said. He argues what, as far as I am concerned, oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed, in pointing out that sexuality itself is a language, of a public and cultural kind, involving a whole network of social responsibilities and attitudes, where involvement in the insistent trivializing and dehumanizing of sex that is the essence of pornography can debase the possibilities of meaningful discourse in that language. He briskly dismisses those rather superficial opponents of pornography who say it is bad because it has bad effects; an assertion that can never be proved to anyone's satisfaction. Robinson writes: "The case against pornography is therefore confused by the cause-and-effect talk. Pornography doesn't *cause* depravity and corruption, it *is* depravity and corruption. . . ." The argument may seem a little cryptic; as I understand it, Robinson is saying that if we properly read—that is to say responsively, even creatively—a work that radically trivializes sex then our capacity for sexual response will itself have become impaired or trivialized, not in any cause-and-effect fashion but in the very act of reading itself. A number of points have to be made here. The first is

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that pornography may be visual or verbal, to be understood as a language in a semiological rather than a literal sense, though the same objection applies; if this is granted one has moved some way from Robinson's central preoccupation with the English language itself as a coded source of meaning and value. The second point is that Robinson's view of sex is avowedly normative. He affirms that though abortion may be normal in some areas of our society it can never be natural, and that there can never meaningfully be such a thing as "homosexual marriage." I agree with him, but don't think his reasons for saying so sufficient; he remarks "abortion can't be thought of in the same way as a visit to a dentist as long as our words retain their power of distinguishing things, as long as our language gives us the power of knowing what is natural." And how long might that be, one asks, sadly and sceptically, given the terrifying power of ideologies to impose and alter meanings? How long, for instance, did the rich and subtle and humane German language resist what the Nazis wanted to do with it? If Robinson wishes to use a word like "natural" in a moral context, when contemporary liberal ideology insists that one can do no such thing, then, like it or not, he is dealing in metaphysics, not just the sacred genius of a language. Or to rephrase the proposition, the values immanent in language need a metaphysical foundation. It is on this point that Robinson falters; like so many English writers he is brilliant at testing tone and feeling and the subtle quality of verbal structures, but evasive about general ideas.

For all that Robinson is a thoroughly necessary critic at the present time, iconoclastic and assiduous and commendably tough-minded. Indeed, he is occasionally a trace too abrasive for my still vestigially liberal sensibilities, as in his resolute insistence that guilt and anxiety are essential aspects of human significance and not to be wished away in the interests of vague well-being; seldom has Therapeutic Man taken a harder knock. I particularly applauded Robinson's discussion of love-poetry, where he reaffirms the traditional truth that some kinds of love are demonic and destructive, and that the literature of love may be subversive as well as affirmative. As he illuminatingly observes, "The extreme case here is the Macbeths, almost the only lovingly married couple in Shakespeare, whose love for each other is *the same* as their monstrous creativity in murder." In this argument Robinson quietly but significantly parts company with Leavis, who believes that *all* great literature must be a force for moral health and growth. And later, in the very heart of his final tribute to Leavis, he makes explicit his disagreement with the Master, when he says that some kinds of creativity can exist without moral or critical responsibilty, and describes Baudelaire as an instance. At this point Robinson seems to be inserting the thin end of a revisionist wedge into the heart of the Leavisian position. He is nothing if not independent: how much better is a book like his, where almost every page provokes an argument than those that one reads and agrees with and instantly forgets.

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LESLIE GEORGE KATZ

Art and Avant-Gardism

PEOPLE, PERSONS ORDINARY OR EXTRAORDINARY, may be said to be most themselves when they are participating in, actively absorbing and thereby becoming expressive of *a mystery of form*—especially a form of art. Such as when they sing to themselves, or attend a concert, make something, go about their work, or experience a painting or sculpture as a part of their lives. Though, as Stravinsky said, art expresses nothing but itself, it is not to be taken for granted. The experience of art is participation in form.

The artist makes, the critic leads one to the art with words. A painting is a deed, and words are deeds. The critic who looks at modern art in all its bewildering variety, and trusting his instincts generously conveys his informed responses, is a radical being. Like the true artist and the true viewer, he is willing to stand alone to make his own judgement, through the integrity of his own knowledge, in the face of the pressure of propaganda and received opinions. Independent, he defends the artist and the viewer from the hegemony of criticism.

Hilton Kramer does this. One finds his critical independence, and a defense of the autonomy of the artist's personality, expressed in the very modifications effected by history and theory, cogently and movingly expounded on every page of his collected essays of 1956-1972, the first book he has published.[1]

The book makes one realize that his art criticism is perhaps unique at present in its intelligent comprehensiveness of view. Who else is attempting to chronicle in detail and overall the amazing movement and excitement of art in this era? His commentaries are not partisan of a new school or scholasticism, play no impresario or up-beat establishmentarian role. His writing has a distinction that does not date. It achieves eminence through a burden of conscientiousness, yoked to a gift that amounts to a vocation. Most of the essays first appeared in *The New York Times,* but they don't read as if they were written for a newspaper or to meet instant deadlines. Each relates the artist and the exhibition to the history of modern art and the career of the artist. In almost 600 pages more than a hundred and fifty artists, all modern or contemporaries, are considered. They range from uncategorical but recognized contributors to present sensibility such as Turner and late Monet; through Twentieth Century Northerners following pioneer ways, like Munch and Schiele; members of the School of Paris whose

[1] THE AGE OF THE AVANT-GARDE, An Art Chronicle of 1956-1972, by *Hilton Kramer.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $15.00.

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freedom of unpredictability is restored by Kramer's unhackneyed viewing; the lonely Americans—Lachaise, Hartley, Walkowitz and others. More than half the book is devoted to contemporary artists of all persuasions and styles (whose single careers sometimes comprise revolutions in personal style): David Smith and Philip Pearlstein, Helen Frankenthaler and Fairfield Porter. The prodigious procession is chronological. Gathered and arranged between hard covers, the individual pieces animate each other. The book marvelously coheres into a point of view that is high service through its fidelity to high standards.

Not only does it carry through its principal stated theme—which is to trace and expose how "avant-gardism" has been taken over by establishment exploitation. Even more importantly, this demonstration is complemented by positive appreciation and understanding of contemporary and recent artists whom Kramer believes to be neglected or misunderstod due to distortions and excesses of current conventionalities of taste. He speaks on behalf of individual artists he admires who work in widely differing styles, such as Turku Trajan, Arnold Friedman, Anne Arnold.

In his introduction Mr. Kramer notes that ". . . Any attempt to separate the avant-garde achievement from the sentimental myths that still surround it runs the risk, of course, of being stigmatized as . . . philistine resistance to artistic vitality." But he states that serious criticism must run that risk, countering present ideologies that wield a "cynical authority over sizeable portions of the very public it affects to despise, by means of a profitable alliance with the traditional antagonists of the avant-garde—the mass media, the universities and the market place. . . ." In reporting on passing and successful fashions in art such as pop and op and their exponents and successors, he separates the goats from the sheep. But throughout the book as well one finds overt and implicit statements on the role the author believes criticism of modern art should perform. In the place of "brilliance and verbal audacity" of wordage which substitutes the values of its own rhetoric for values supposed to be in the works of art (and one finds this substitution widely now in criticism of films and literature) he calls for "the clarity and intellectual candor which should be the first principles of criticism." Near the end of his book, in a short section of comment and appreciation of Clement Greenberg, Sir Herbert Read and Harold Rosenberg, he speaks in one case of finding ". . . a void which only a more workaday criticism can fill—criticism which focusses not only on motives, intentions and the interplay of the artist and audience but, above all, on the actuality of the given work of art."

In those actualities the book provides its balance of gratifications, singling out the struggle and uncertainty not only of artists who have not ever or who no longer receive their due of attention, but of artists of great fame whose image tends to become cliché. A grandeur of in-

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sight brings the art alive. Aesthetic history is elucidated, its importance and its irrelevance to personal development; and the contradictions are defended.

Writing of the great Matisse exhibition in Paris in 1970 he says that ". . . especially in our encounters with works of modernist art, this sense of history is often the primary intermediary . . . for modernism is itself the offspring of an acute historical self-consciousness." But the sense of history may be a myth in thrall to a theory, he continues. "In art, as in love, or indeed in any form of contingent human experience, what has misfired, what has been refused, and what has actually failed are frequently the key to a real understanding of what has been achieved. . . . At thirty, an age when an artist might nowadays be planning his first retrospective, Matisse had not yet found the ground on which his sensibility could flower."

The uncertainties, the palpable searchings, the ever unresolved elements within the artist excite Kramer's defense of art's complex specificity against critical generalization. For example: "With Picasso, we are back on the hard rock of fundamental accomplishment. We are reminded that the most devastating and illuminating criticism of art comes not from what critics write but from what artists—great artists —do." An article on Giacometti's early work, concerned with the human head, face and figure, the first twenty years of sculptural effort largely forgotten for the later work, refers to Giacometti's ". . . very profound, but very fecund, uncertainty that is a precondition for that creative use of the innocent eye. . . . Only when we have come to terms with Giacometti who is the principal living successor to the 'uncertainties' of Cézanne shall we be really in touch with his achievements of the last two decades." Writing of Medardo Rosso, a nineteenth-century sculptor whose works are now seldom exhibited: "From the social caricaturism of Daumier to the purism of Brancusi might look like an enormous esthetic distance, but nevertheless, Rosso somehow contains the elements of one as well as the other."

Kramer's perceptions may themselves be said to span that distance. The false distinctions and conflicts of realism versus abstraction do not appear in his book. He is a partisan of his affinities, presents them openly for what they are, and does not wrap them in sermonizing doctrine. He is not an art guru but a man in love with art who writes about the incredible range of exhibitions going on of modern art past and present. You are not asked to agree, but to respect the response. "The history of modern art," he says, "has always been a good deal more pluralistic than avant-garde doctrine has ever permitted us to believe. Edward Hopper was Paul Klee's contemporary; Fairfield Porter was Jackson Pollock's, Marsden Hartley was Marcel Duchamp's. . . ." And, writing of the example of Bonnard: ". . . with every new exhibition of his work Bonnard ascends to the heights of our esteem. The painter who never quite fitted the avant-garde mold has triumphed

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over many of the artists who fitted all too cosily. . . . The example of Bonnard cautions us against the hard and fast certainties of current dogma."

The book begins after its introduction with a section of seventeen essays on artists of the Nineteenth Century, considering in addition to Turner and late Monet, Degas as expressionist, Redon, Puvis de Chavannes, Whistler, Mary Cassatt and others, ending with "The Stratagems of Realism," which begins: "Every work of art is a fiction—a fantasy endowed with the power not only to coexist with real objects of this world but to modify in some degree the very manner in which we perceive those objects."

The second section, "The Twentieth Century," is subdivided into "Germans and Other Northerners," "The School of Paris," and "Americans," sixty-three essays in all. The first includes Munch, Schiele and Nolde; Feininger, Grosz, Klee, Kandinsky, Beckmann, Rodchenko, Mondrian; and the British sculptors Epstein, Hepworth and Henry Moore. "The School of Paris" centers on Matisse and Picasso, then Braque and Gris, Lipschitz and Chagall, Soutine, Modigliani, Leger, Duchamp, and Giacometti. Among the "Americans" are Lachaise, Hartley, Dove and Maurer, Arnold Friedman, Sheeler, Walkowitz, Hopper, Baizerman, Gorky, Milton Avery. "Contemporaries" gives estimates of David Smith, Pollock, de Kooning, Albers, Nevelson, Balthus, and ranges from Francis Bacon to Saul Steinberg, the sculptors Noguchi, Trajan and Mary Frank, George Segal, Anne Arnold and William King, painters Leland Bell, Pearlstein, Ellsworth Kelly, Alex Katz and Helen Frankenthaler. A short section on photography as an art covers Cartier-Bresson, Edward Weston, Paul Strand, Bill Brandt, Walker Evans and Diane Arbus. Essays on three critics and a coda "Into the Seventies" conclude the book, which also contains groups of serviceable reproductions, mostly one to a page.

A catalogue of the contents can suggest the range, but not the energy and zest, the evocations of actualities of paint and plaster and metal and wood, drawing and construction, encompassed by an instructive intelligence that does not pretend to have the last word (thank god), but rejoices in undertaking a direct report of encounter. A newspaper is a platform of immediacy. A superficial critic under the pressure of its instantaneous deadlines can fall into pandering—to prevailing tastes demanding you be "with it," or to his need to maintain power. There is the constant danger of over-reacting, over-stating, over-defining. (Most criticism is joy-killing, subtle or blatant.) But in the hands of a superior and serious mind, to whom journalism is a calling, the very instantaneity is a challenge in depth. First rate original minds have managed to survive and thrive in the center rather than on the fringes of commentary. Among them have been G. B. Shaw, Theodor Herzl, James Huneker, Henry Mencken. They are saved from the parochialisms of the professional intellectuals and aca-

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demics by their function of workaday responsibility. Their constituents are not like-minds or an enclaved class. They live in the heart of the contradictions and mediate. They honestly represent the work reviewed to a potentially intelligent audience and they represent the audience to the work.

But something in addition to the essayistic style is evident in this book. One's attention is held by a momentum of language that could be termed musical in its quality of discourse. The pulse of the themes in the short essay form reminds one of lieder. The voice, the instrument as it were, has a distinction of timbre and range one recognizes as strong lyricism of personality.

The earliest articles here presented were published more than fifteen years ago. We should by now have learned never to underestimate the power of cultural lag, especially in a nation where since its inception the "new" has been the principal commodity. (Just now some museums feel called upon to become amusement parks, while amusement parks are turning into museums.) Until recently *promotion* has been our largest unassailable industry. The advertising mind has moved into culture, as we all know. Prime cultural commodities of the moment are madness, nostalgia, empty space filled with crowds, and decibels. ("Madness" is perhaps the greatest *put on.*) Superficial and shabby values prevailing in the avant-gardism pose of the art-world reign as well in literature, though some critics have dared to speak up. Television, film corporations, big publishing houses and intellectual journals can be in perfect agreement about the latest "masterpieces" of fiction and film.

It is not a thankful task to criticize the righteousness of well educated gangsterisms or the pusillanimous capitulations of sage critics to denim-vested interests. The stakes are high. The more influence you have, the more of a threat you are to complacent exploitation.

The last essay in this book reports a horrific exhibition of neo-dada art in Germany in the summer of 1972, and contrasts the dada claim of "revolt" against established culture with the academic establishment neo-dada has itself become. The massive exhibition catalogue is described, its cover depicting a colony of ants against a vivid orange background,

> . . . with its long theoretical introduction sporting dozens of learned references . . . . and of course, enough bibliographical data to keep the graduate schools humming for years. The ant hill and the bibliography—the symbolism is perfect. This is what the victory of dada has come to—established culture employing its resources in a vigorous effort to destroy itself.

Against the new urge to conform few voices are raised, and even

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fewer manage to establish a continuing public dialogue. The possible effectiveness of independent voices seeking to determine honesty of fact has recently and unexpectedly been made plain in politics by persistent disinterested "reporters." Has the time come for a Watergate in the world of current American art and literature? Can honesty sufficiently awaken a supine and intimidated public, and need reaction be reactionary?

Culture in America is an unending civil war of values. One takes a stand. In the effort to defend art against sham values of destruction and self-destruction in the name of profiteering advance, this book has tremendous significance. Read as literature on behalf of art as civilization, it is a landmark achievement that should and may have repercussions long beyond the moment of its publication.

SONYA RUDIKOFF

O World, O *Life*, O *Time* . . .

"YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY," smirks the cigarette ad, exploiting the feminist slant. Women's liberation, like the counter-culture, and the black liberation movement, provides another rich vein of experience to be mined by all the sophisticated and alert people who uncover commercial possibilities in new ideas and movements. They have brought us vivid news about what it is like to be black, Chicano, a hippie, a flower child, a student revolutionary, an addict, a member of a commune. With no difficulty at all, the world of advertising assimilates and consumes each of these new tendencies almost before they circulate in the public mind, almost before the books are published. It was to be expected, then, that the news about Women's Lib would undergo the same sort of transformation, as a kind of worldly accompaniment to what the publishers have been providing, that avalanche of material on women in the past and the present and future.

Jane Howard, a former writer for *Life,* embarked on such a project: to find out what women were thinking across the country in this recent

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stage of women's liberation, the activist, political, social, legal, and administrative implementation of women's rights.[1] The report of her explorations and adventures from one coast to the other is not a carefully researched, analytical or statistical survey of the subject, nor a theoretical or philosophical or political discussion, but, instead, a very personal meditation on numerous women met and interviewed, all presented through the filter of her own life as a single modern woman. The book has been widely praised and acclaimed, which is a little hard to understand, because it reads slowly, is really rather boring, and fundamentally silly. Ms. Howard's willingness to sacrifice almost every thought or insight to a *bon mot,* or to an arch and tidy classification, deprives the effort of genuine seriousness, and at the same time prevents it from being really funny.

Ultimately, as a report on what women nowadays are *really like,* or even on what Jane Howard herself really thinks, its value is considerably diminished by the assumption behind the project, that in a few brief interviews, taking notes on restaurant bills or the like, an interested observer can find out something which, if compared with one's own life, will reveal something else. Nothing is probed too deeply, not even her own relationships with men which form a steady and intrusive accompaniment to the odyssey. The woman who works in a bar, the one married to a fisherman, the Southern girl in a small town, the older woman teaching English, the woman who worked on tunnel construction in Colorado, the women in Sausalito, in San Francisco, Phoenix, West Virginia, the old lady in New Hampshire who makes maple sugar, the woman who runs a cat kennel, the sister, the old college friends, the roommates, the Ken Kesey circle, the communards, the faculty wives, the Chicanos—either they are all extremely boring people, or Ms. Howard simply cannot make them vivid. None of them remains in the mind, all shift and slide together. Then various men evaporate, everything is cancelled by everything else, and nothing at all has been advanced about women either by themselves or in relation to men or careers or children.

There are two important exceptions to this. Jane Howard's mother is extremely prominent in the report, and so is the early life in Springfield, Illinois, in Winnetka, the family in Decatur, Illinois, and a lot of the old remembered texture of growing up in the Middle West in the Depression and getting to the East. And *Life* was another family for Ms. Howard. When she speaks of these two worlds, and of their importance for her, the tone is more genuine and easy. Whatever anyone may think of *Time* and of *Life,* and of their social or intellectual contribution, they clearly managed to create for their staffs a kind of extended family which came to matter so much that when *Life's* demise was announced in December of 1972, the staff of sophisticated, ambitious, and not especially tender people burst into tears and kept

[1] A DIFFERENT WOMAN, by *Jane Howard.* E. P. Dutton. $7.95.

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on crying for weeks and months. *The New Yorker* became such a world for those associated with it, as the late Stanley Edgar Hyman often remarked, and so have many other publications in this country and abroad. Smaller ones, like *Combat,* as Camus wrote about it, or *transition,* or all the little magazines of the heroic period, all have the sense of an *équipe,* a small band of brothers or warriors; larger journals are like families or communities. They seem to *represent* something, they exert a cohesive and communal force, they often have private languages, and certainly are organized into secret patterns of power and stratification which only members of the "family" know about.They often publish intimate in-house newsletters, like *Life's f.y.i.,* which reinforce the private network; they generously provide for and sanction and overlook and float black sheep or prodigal sons, and win straying sheep back to the fold. When these publications die, as they do regularly—the most recent victim is *Book World,* of the *Washington Post*—those associated with them feel cruelly abandoned and betrayed. Such were Jane Howard's feelings when *Life* expired. Her loss of this almost total community—the more embracing just because it was right in the middle of New York, like an underworld—challenged her to rediscover her own identity, in a fascimile of the adolescent imperative, and to learn how to live without this "family" which had been hers for seventeen years.

The death of her mother had occurred the year before the death of *Life,* and it was the conjunction of these two events in her life which impelled the writing of the book. Her mother's sudden death from a stroke, in her sixties, left Jane Howard not only emotionally shaken but unclear about what sort of woman her mother was, what sort of woman she herself was or should be or might be, and, by implication what womanhood was about. She was well into her thirties at the time, she had been on her own, had traveled, had lived that expense-account life so characteristic of modern experience: Tangier for lunch, and London for breakfast, Gangtok, British Columbia, Calcutta, and "it wasn't bad being in Mallorca, either." She had written a book about Esalen, she used four-letter words, she drank, smoked marijuana, didn't marry, considered having a child, and carried a suitcase with a lot of airport labels on it. But it didn't add up to a life, although once it had seemed to.

The mother, Eleanor Howard, was a certain kind of interesting person formed by Middle Western life of the last hundred years, alert, perceptive, intelligent although not deeply educated, independent but not in the crazy Southern style, subtle under the cover of ordinary conventionality and small discriminations. She was the sort of woman who assumed an audience for her irony although she didn't command it, who would say, "I feel sorry for everyone who doesn't have the other half of my grapefruit," and whose cleverness was not pursued beyond the immediate occasion for it. Anyone who has known women

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like this will recognize the cool insistence, the self-protective, remote, merciless attention to detail, and the importance of the private understandings and the shared complicity in a vague contempt for others. Driving through the countryside, Mrs. Howard's companion might comment on the beautiful sunset and Mrs. Howard would say "Thank you": only a fool or an outsider would fail to catch the precision, the small discrimination, the moral nicety. Jane Howard, of course, left all that world for *Life,* but it is the experience represented by her mother, and that world of her own childhood which retains a stamp of authentic feeling. None of the elegant or exotic places visited by Jane Howard, Career Girl, has quite the interest that used to be evoked by the restaurant in Springfield where they asked "Do you want some *au jus* with your roast beef?" Of the two families which claimed Jane Howard, it was the Middle Western family that won out over the adopted family of *Life,* and New York, and the hep jet world.

The subsidiary theme, of Middle West versus the East, of old-timey life against the new morality, of Illinois childhood contrasted with the canonical wanderings of the "New York career girl"—all this, even campy as it is, lurches out of place and quite overshadows the ostensible subject of the book, that idea of surveying feminism and what women are thinking. It was a foolish project, perhaps, and should have been abandoned. Without some general ideas or emphases, a series of interviews with a lot of different women about themselves as women will remain exactly that. The variety of human experience insures that women, like men, will not all feel the same way about even similar life situations, so that either the data of experience must be organized in terms of general principles, or the uniqueness of each case must be plumbed as it is in novels. Ms. Howard uses neither of these methods to understand her own or other women's lives, but, in the manner of *Life,* throws out unusual shots or an occasional spread of several pages. She is not interested in the ideas of the women's movement, nor in the actualities of women's emancipation, but in these instant glimpses of human interest, the sort of flash glimpse one might get from a particularly good *Life* photograph. Her interest is piqued by women as "characters," almost as caricatures. All the women she selects for the fleeting glimpse have that independence, wit, inexplicably tough and resilient power, they are brave, game, and have that occasionally inventive quality associated with the women of her Middle Western family, especially her mother, and some aunts such as her aunt Martha, of whom she says, "I think she could tell me a lot I would like to hear," something she doesn't say about any of the "new" women she encounters.

Inevitably, this admiration turns into something not quite plausible, a false nostalgia. The mother, who was known to her Winnetka and Springfield friends as The Blithe Spirit, becomes misted over with

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another image, and instead of old suburban Winnetka, we get an attempt at Hometown, U.S.A. Even the book jacket conspires in this falsity, with its color picture of the traditional quilt pattern, the sunburst!

> Wholesomeness is exotic to me. I pretended to like the era of strobe lights and deafening acid rock in discotheques, but a lot of that sixties frenzy really just made me nervous. More and more I am drawn toward stillness. So it is with the women's movement: its theorists interest me less than those Closet Feminists, as I have come to think of them, who wrest sap from the trees, fish from the seas, or fashion quilts from scraps of cloth. Yoked to their menfolk, to whom they are faithful and whom they survive, they flourish on a fraction of the options granted most of us. Without being ideological about it, or even articulating it at all, these women embody the movement's best principles. They don't confuse strength with gender, nor do they use their sex as an excuse to avoid responsibility. There are still a lot of these American noblewomen around. . . .

Ms. Howard goes on to object to the noise and unattractiveness of Women's Lib, she compares it to the zeal of Pentecostal sects, says she prefers to be in the woodwinds not the percussion section, and so on. This of course is Winnetka speaking, answering a threat with an appeal to taste, which is exactly what the young Jane Howard abhorred in that old Middle West of her growing-up. The divided mind is not unique, certainly not in our own day, when so many do the right thing for the wrong reason, or the other way around. People tend to admire certain types of character structure while condemning the society that produces them—as Riesman's inner-directed type was so widely praised. People who reject illusions and the repressive society, who are committed to destroying repressions and liberating everyone, wil nevertheless be drawn toward examples of character in repressive societies, and will be troubled by this. It is an important dilemma, even a classic one, echoing all through history and literature, not easily resolved, certainly not by a synthetic nostalgia.

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Report

Letter from England

In a recent "viewpoint" in the *TLS,* Peter Porter wrote that he is "alarmed at the flight from literature among the British middle and professional classes." His implication was that the rot starts at the top—with a royal family having only a peripheral interest in any of the arts (Princess Margaret and the visual arts, the Earl of Harewood and music), and a prime minister who is a competent musical executant and sufficiently adept to be able to conduct the London Symphony Orchestra but who has also been reported as "loathing books." The British Arts Council continues to doie out unprecedentedly large sums of money to opera, ballet, and the theatre (though these are not so vast when compared with the subsidies granted by several German regional governments and municipalities); but the grants to literature are still paltry. Sales of serious fiction have slumped to a level which has made many publishers ruthlessly prune their fiction lists.

It is more difficult to establish what the poetry situation is—"this unpopular art," as Auden wrote,

> which cannot be turned into
> background noise for study
> or hung as a status-trophy by rising executives,
> cannot be "done" like Venice
> or abridged like Tolstoy, but stubbornly still insists upon
> being read or ignored.

The pop-circuit, described by Philip Hobsbaum in the Autumn 1973 number of this journal, has its own young and fickle audience, but it is not an audience that puts book-buying at all high even on its list of luxury priorities. What certainly seems to have vanished is a middle-class, broadly cultivated but unspecialised readership—that audience which, over the decades, queued for the latest volume of Tennyson, bought the various anthologies of *Georgian Poetry,* and bought Eliot and Auden during the 1930's and 1940's and Dylan Thomas' *Collected Poems* (after Thomas' death, admittedly). John Betjeman's *Collected Poems* of 1958 is the last landmark of that sort—which is no reason for despising Betjeman, as some high-minded British critics have done ("No one so popular can be any good" is the implication). And the audience that knows Betjeman, however one characterises it ("upper-middle-class and lower-middle-aged" was

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somebody's formulation), is almost entirely unaware of Philip Larkin, Ted Hughes, Peter Porter, Roy Fuller, or any of the poets to whom Philip Hobsbaum referred in "British Poetry Now."

One could argue that there are economic reasons for the general slump in the sales of new fiction and poetry—that such books have become too expensive. The average cost of a casebound novel has gone up by five times in the past twenty years, and about six or seven times with a similar book of poems. But theatre tickets, for example, have soared almost equally, and the theatres aren't empty. And it seems only a half answer to submit, as Adrian Mitchell did in his first volume, *Poems,* that "Most people ignore most poetry because most poetry ignores most people." Such ingratiating populism should, logically, applaud the fact that the slim volumes of Patience Strong (saccharine verses about flowers, love, hope and undifferentiated soul-yearnings) are reputed to sell a quarter of a million copies each year in South Africa alone—which may be a judgment on South Africa rather than on Patience Strong. And the economic argument is in any case a circular one.

What does exist is a bigger educational (if not educated) audience than ever before—"the dutiful mob that signs on every September," as Larkin gloomily put it. Children in the schools, preparing for public examinations, find themselves having to "do" a few poems by Hughes or Gunn, or a cut version of Amis's *Lucky Jim,* or some short stories by Alan Sillitoe. "English" as the cornerstone of a liberal education has gradually established itself, in however diluted a form, in the wake of Leavis' doctrines, and the encouragement of poetry—writing it as well as reading it—has played a big part in this. Such pioneer anthologies for schools as David Holbrook's *Iron, Honey, Gold* and the Penguin Books series of *Voices* and *Junior Voices* have been staple fodder here, and they have been much imitated. These books go hand in hand with an emphasis on encouraging the child's own creativity. One result of this, which can be almost directly attributed to the Penguin anthologies, has been the classroom adoption of the Japanese *haiku* form, so that the schools of England have hiccoughed out thousands of these tiny seventeen-syllable verses—in English, of course.

I am not alone in being doubtful, and sometimes actually cynical, about this emphasis on "creativity" (or, as it once appeared throughout a BBC secretary's transcript of Norman Mailer, "queer activity"). Too often it has been a matter of inept or unimaginative teachers misunderstanding or misinterpreting notions only vaguely grasped, so that dreary formal analysis of Wordsworth's "Daffodils" has been replaced by dreary imitations of Ted Hughes's animal poems. The undifferentiated command "Homework is write a poem" is no more life-enhancing than "Homework is answer these questions about 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' ". Even more suspect, and potentially dangerous

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(though not as widespread), is the David Holbrookian encouragement to get the children to dig deep into their own psyches, so that the teacher is faced with hitherto buried "problems" and dark fantasies: tampering of this sort is as unpleasant as the prospect of Spike Milligan's "well-known amateur brain-surgeon."

The British educational system as a whole has gone through a series of convulsions and revolutions and counter-revolutions ever since the Butler Education Act of 1944, and my remarks about "English" have to be fitted into that wider context. The universities, particularly the new universities, have staggered along the same path, between diffidence and dogmatism. When, a few years ago, the *TLS* ran a series of anonymous investigations into the country's English departments, the cries of rage and pain were shrill. How was it possible for a student to spend three years in a university Department of Literature (so-called) and emerge at the end without having read a single word of Shakespeare—except under the heading of "Political thought"? Antediluvian progressions at some of the older provincial universities through Beowulf to syllabuses that petered out in the nineteenth century were contrasted with those universities where the liberality of options was such that a student could satisfactorily cover a year's courses on the strength of Jane Austen, Sylvia Plath, and something called "Sea Imagery." "Relevant"—a word that some took to be an American importation—became a battle-call for many students. Thus it was, I suppose, that during a spell of university teaching recently I found one student whose every comment, oral or written, was filtered through his imperfect understanding of R. D. Laing, a "relevant" guru.

I think what I am working round to saying is that there is no longer someone called the Common (or General) Reader. There is a broad educational audience, heterogeneous and largely passive, united only by the fact that literature is part of the curriculum; and there is that amorphous creature "the man in the street," of whom Anthony Burgess has said: "he goes to bookshops for the pornographic or the didactic, rarely for the static delights of art." Clearly the elitist audience that formed the readership of, for example, the nineteenth-century quarterlies has long since vanished; but so has the broader audience that stemmed from it and followed it, that of the Workers Educational Association, for example—the members of WEA classes today largely seem to be a narrow segment of the middle class which has untypical hankerings after self-help and knowledge.

It was the Common Reader, hungry for ideals and opinions, that read such journals of review and comment as the *TLS,* the *New Statesman,* the *Listener,* the *Spectator.* During the past dozen or fifteen years—as Peter Porter lamented in his "Viewpoint" piece—this readership has shrunk, and all these periodicals are struggling. Strenuous and sometimes desperate attempts have been made to stop the erosion, to hang on to old readers and win new ones. A few years ago the

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New Statesman thought it could do this by cutting down the solid chunks of print and scattering photographs and cartoons throughout the magazine; but the old audience was offended, and a mere change of layout was hardly enough to attract a new one. The *TLS* is about to have a new editor, John Gross, and it's presumed that he will bring considerable changes; the most radical change will no doubt be the abandonment of the *TLS's* traditionally anonymous reviewing. But will this, or any such change, find an adequate number of new readers to stop the paper's slow decline? I doubt it. The prosperous middle class is no longer interested in literature or in opinions about literature; it seems to want "features," "the news behind the news," the higher (and lower) gossip, whether ostensibly serious (as in the *Sunday Times*'s "Insight" pages) or scurrilous (as in *Private Eye*'s amalgam of satire, scandal-mongering and right-wing public-school anarchism).

It is "News," in fact, that more and more seems to dominate one's consciousness in Britain today: news bulletins, news comment, news features eat up more and more time on television and radio, while the BBC Third Programme—that sometimes foolish but often admirable monument of post-war cultural idealism—has shrunk to a service almost entirely devoted to music: excellent of its sort, but not at all the broad-based intellectual exercise it was intended to be. As the media blast one every half hour with tidings of national crisis, it seems frivolous to lament the decline of the old *New Statesman*-reading, novel-buying, poetry-listening audience. Yet the strength of that audience was that it was not a passive one, drugged into inertia by regular bulletins of doom, but a heterogeneous body of people who were opinionated, sceptical, idealistic, and active.

The way I have characterised the non-audience that has succeeded it may look as if it has taken its non-colour from the "pernicious anaemia" of Philip Hobsbaum's article—that disease with which many commentators, both inside and outside Britain, see the country's literature and culture to be afflicted today. But a failure of self-confidence such as Britain is reputed to have undergone for the past twenty or so years can be marked in many diverse, apparently conflicting, ambivalent ways. An odd example of this, to my mind, was the critical reception given early in 1973 to Philip Larkin's *Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse*. The most violent—indeed, almost hysterical—abuse came from such critics as Donald Davie and Geoffrey Grigson, who seemed to see the book as an insult to "English," because of the way in which it gave considerable space to writers who (it was thought by these critics) had long ago had their reputations satisfactorily demolished, and paid too little attention to poets who transcended English (or British) limitations, such as David Jones, Hugh MacDiarmid and Basil Bunting.

What these reviewers failed to notice (or, if they noticed it, failed to appreciate) was that Larkin's anthology faithfully keeps pace with the times; wars, depressions, urban stresses, rural daydreams, imperial

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losses, domestic certainties as opposed to international uncertainties, even the thinning away into a "pop" culture in the 1960's—all these aspects of social history find their place, their chronological place, in the book. One may not like the story it tells, but it is a true story. Perhaps significantly, the only reviewer who seemed to sense this was not an Englishman but an American—Robert Lowell, who wrote some idiosyncratic pages about it in the May *Encounter*. And yet according to Hobsbaum it is the Americans who have been the chief reprovers of our supposed failure of nerve. As Lowell observed: "I have lived here too long to teach the English English, too little to avoid vexations with immigration."

It was, I think, the old Common Reader that Larkin had in mind as he was compiling his anthology, because that is the standpoint of his own natural taste. That such readers hardly exist any more was perhaps made manifest by the reactions of Davie and co., who prefer to trace other genealogies, erect other pantheons, see a contradictory laying-on of hands. I would argue myself that whatever David Jones, Hugh MacDiarmid and Basil Bunting share, and whatever merit their work has, it has little or nothing to do with an English tradition: a mystical Welsh Catholic, a Scottish communist, a Persian-soaked Poundian. . . .

It has been argued, though not very convincingly, that the "flight from literature" began when literature became "difficult" (with Pound, Eliot, Joyce). One can say with more certainty that the arrival of these "difficult" writers coincided with the growth of university departments of English, though it is hard to establish a connection between the two facts. What is completely certain is that Burgess' "pornographic and didactic" survive, and look likely to survive with vigour.

—ANTHONY THWAITE

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Philip Hobsbaum's article, *The Present Condition of British Poetry* (Autumn, 1973), is both superficial and inaccurate. He quotes an uncharacteristic poem by Peter Dale calling him "one of Mr. Hamilton's protegés." Evidently Mr. Hobsbaum knows so little about British poetry that he is unaware that Peter Dale has been associate editor of *Agenda* for some years and never in any sense "a protegé" of Ian Hamilton or anyone else. Peter Dale's first book, *Walk from*

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the House (Fantasy Press) was published in 1962, eight years before Hamilton's *The Visit* (Faber, 1970) and his second book, *The Storms* (Macmillan) in 1968. Dale was not even sent the questionnaire on the state of English poetry which formed the basis of the last issue of *The Review*.

If Hobsbaum knew Dale's original poetry and his recent translation of Villon (Macmillan, 1973) he would not have made the mistake of confusing him with "a few half-hearted stragglers from the Imagist revolution of 1912." There is a much greater range of content and form in the poetry of Peter Dale than there is in that of Ian Hamilton or any of the other poets published by *The Review*.

WILLIAM COOKSON, Editor
Agenda

London

Dear Sir,

I first came across the poetry of Peter Dale in *The Review* some ten years ago. Since then, Mr. Dale has been a regular contributor to this rather exclusive magazine. The fact that he has become associate editor of the rather less exclusive *Agenda* is beside the point. His verse fits more neatly into the ambience of *The Review* than would that of (say) Peter Redgrove or Martin Bell. Both of these, indeed, have been attacked by *The Review*. Mr. Dale, on the other hand, has been among the recipients of its editor's rare accolades. Mr. Cookson can deny none of this and therefore owes me an apology for his letter.

PHILIP HOBSBAUM

Glasgow

Dear Sir,

Owing to a muddle and misunderstanding, my poem "I lean out . . ." was published both in *New Directions* #27 and *The Hudson Review* (Autumn, 1973). I wish to apologize to both you and the readers of *The Hudson Review* for this serious inadvertence on my part.

HILDA MORLEY

New York City

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